THE SIGN OF FOUR

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SIR ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE

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The Science of Deduction

Sherlock Holmes took his bottle from the corner of the mantelpiece and his hypodermic syringe from its neat morocco case With his long white nervous fingers he adjusted the delicate needle and rolled back his left shirtcuff For some little time his eyes rested thoughtfully upon the sinewy forearm and wrist all dotted and scarred with innumerable puncture marks Finally he thrust the sharp point home, pressed down the tiny piston and sank back into the velvet lined armchair with a long sigh of satisfaction

Three times a day for many months I had witnessed this performance but custom had not reconciled my mind to it On the contrary from day to day I had become more irritable at the sight and my conscience swelled nightly within me at the thought that I had lacked the courage to protest Again and again I had registered a vow that I should deliver my soul upon the subject, but there was that in the cool nonchalant air of my companion which made him the last man with whom one would care to take anything approaching to a liberty His great powers, his masterly manner and the experience which I had had of his many extraordinary qualities, all made me diffident and backward in crossing him

Yet upon that afternoon, whether it was the Beaune which I had taken with my lunch or the additional exasperation produced by the extreme deliberation of his manner I suddenly felt that I could hold out no longer

'Which is it to day I asked morphine or cocaine?

He raised his eyes languidly from the old black letter volume which he had opened

It is cocaine he said a seven per cent solution Would you care to try it?

No indeed I answered brusquely My constitution has not got over the Afghan campaign yet I cannot afford to throw any extra strain upon it

He smiled at my vehemence Perhaps you are right Watson he said I suppose that its influence is physically a bad one I find it however so transcendently stimulating and clarifying to the mind that its secondary action is a matter of small moment

But consider! I said earnestly Count the cost! Your brain may as you say be roused and excited but it is a pathological and morbid process which involves increased tissue change and may at least leave a permanent weakness You know too what a black reaction comes upon you Surely the game is hardly worth the candle Why should you for a mere passing pleasure risk the loss of those great powers with which you have been endowed? Remember that I speak not only as one comrade to another but as a medical man to one for whose constitution he is to some extent answerable

He did not seem offended On the contrary he put his finger tips together and leaned his elbows on the arms of his chair like one who has a relish for conversation

My mind he said rebels at stagnation Give me problems give me work give me the most abstruse cryptogram or the most intricate analysis and I am in my own proper atmosphere I can dispense then with artificial stimulants But I abhor the dull routine of existence I crave for mental exaltation That is why I have chosen my own particular profession or rather created it for I am the only one in the world

The only unofficial detective? I said raising my eyebrows

The only unofficial consulting detective he answered I am the last and highest court of appeal in detection

When Gregson or Lestrade or Athelney Jones are out of their depths – which by the way is their normal state – the matter is laid before me I examine the data as an expert and pronounce a specialist s opinion I claim no credit in such cases My name figures in no newspaper The work itself, the pleasure of finding a field for my peculiar powers is my highest reward But you have yourself had some experience of my methods of work in the Jefferson Hope case

'Yes, indeed said I cordially I was never so struck by anything in my life I even embodied it in a small brochure with the somewhat fantastic title of A Study in Scarlet

He shook his head sadly

I glanced over it said he Honestly I cannot con gratulate you upon it Detection is or ought to be an exact science and should be treated in the same cold and unemotional manner You have attempted to tinge it with romanticism which produces much the same effect as if you worked a love story or an elopement into the fifth proposition of Euclid

But the romance was there I remonstrated I could not tamper with the facts

Some facts should be suppressed or at least a just sense of proportion should be observed in treating them The only point in the case which deserved mention was the curious analytical reasoning from effects to causes by which I succeeded in unravelling it

I was annoyed at this criticism of a work which had been specially designed to please him I confess too that I was irritated by the egotism which seemed to demand that every line of my pamphlet should be devoted to his own special doings More than once during the years that I had lived with him in Baker Street I had observed that a small vanity underlay my companion s quiet and didactic manner I made no remark however but sat nursing my wounded leg I

had had a Jezail bullet through it some time before and though it did not prevent me from walking it ached wearily at every change of the weather

My practice has extended recently to the Continent said Holmes after a while filling up his old brier root pipe I was consulted last week by François le Villard who as you probably know has come rather to the front lately in the French detective service He has all the Celtic power of quick intuition but he is deficient in the wide range of exact knowledge which is essential to the higher developments of his art The case was concerned with a will and possessed some features of interest I was able to refer him to two parallel cases the one at Riga in 1857 and the other at St Louis in 1871 which have suggested to him the true solution Here is the letter which I had this morning acknowledging my assistance

He tossed over as he spoke a crumpled sheet of foreign notepaper I glanced my eyes down it catching a profusion of notes of admiration with stray *magnifiques* *coup de maitres* and *tours de force* all testifying to the ardent admiration of the Frenchman

He speaks as a pupil to his master said I

Oh he rates my assistance too highly said Sherlock Holmes lightly He has considerable gifts himself He possesses two out of the three qualities necessary for the ideal detective He has the power of observation and that of deduction He is only wanting in knowledge and that may come in time He is now translating my small works into French

Your works?

Oh didn t you know? he cried laughing Yes I have been guilty of several monographs They are all upon technical subjects Here for example is one Upon the Distinction between the Ashes of the Various Tobaccos In it I enumerate a hundred and forty forms of cigar cigarette and pipe tobacco with coloured plates illustrating the difference in the ash It is a point

which is continually turning up in criminal trials and which is sometimes of supreme importance as a clue If you can say definitely for example that some murder had been done by a man who was smoking an Indian *lunkah* it obviously narrows your field of search To the trained eye there is as much difference between the black ash of a Trichinopoly and the white fluff of bird s eye as there is between a cabbage and a potato

You have an extraordinary genius for minutiae, I remarked

I appreciate their importance Here is my monograph upon the tracing of footsteps, with some remarks upon the uses of plaster of Paris as a preserver of impresses Here too is a curious little work upon the influence of a trade upon the form of the hand with lithotypes of the hands of slaters sailors cork cutters compositors, weav rs and diamond polishers That is a matter of great practical interest to the scientific detective – especially in cases of unclaimed bodies or in discovering the antecedents of criminals But I weary you with my hobby

Not at all I answered earnestly It is of the greatest interest to me especially since I have had the opportunity of observing your practical application of it But you spoke just now of observation and deduction Surely the one to some extent implies the other

Why hardly he answered leaning back luxuriously in his armchair and sending up thick blue wreaths from his pipe For example observation shows me that you have been to the Wigmore Street Post Office this morning but deduction lets me know that when there you dispatched a telegram

Right! said I Right on both po ! But I confess that I don t see how you arrived at t was a sudden impulse upon my part and I have mentioned it to no one

It is simplicity itself, he remarked chuckling at my

I sprang from my chair and limped impatiently about the room with considerable bitterness in my heart

'This is unworthy of you Holmes I said I could not have believed that you would have descended to this You have made inquiries into the history of my unhappy brother and you now pretend to deduce this knowledge in some fanciful way You cannot expect me to believe that you have read all this from his old watch! It is unkind and to speak plainly has a touch of charlatan ism in it

My dear doctor said he kindly pray accept my apologies Viewing the matter is an abstract problem I had forgotten how personal and painful a thing it might be to you I assure you however that I never even knew that you had a brother until you handed me the watch

Then how in the name of all that is wonderful did you get these facts? They are absolutely correct in every particular

Ah that is good luck I could only say what was the balance of probability I did not at all expect to be so accurate

But it was not mere guesswork?

No no I never guess It is a shocking habit – destructive to the logical faculty What seems strange to you is only so because you do not follow my train of thought or observe the small facts upon which large inferences may depend For example I began by stating that your brother was careless When you observe the lower part of that watch case you notice that it is not only dinted in two places but it is cut and marked all over from the habit of keeping other hard objects such as coins or keys in the same pocket Surely it is no great feat to assume that a man who treats a fifty guinea watch so cavalierly must be a careless man Neither is it a very far fetched inference that a man who inherits one article of such value is pretty well provided for in other respects

Miss Mary Morstan he read Hum! I have no recollection of the name Ask the young lady to step up Mrs Hudson Don t go, Doctor I should prefer that you remain

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The Statement of the Case

Miss Morstan entered the room with a firm step and an outward composure of manner She was a blonde young lady, small dainty well gloved and dressed in the most perfect taste There was however a plainness and simplicity about her costume which bore with it a suggestion of limited means The dress was a sombre greyish beige untrimmed and unbraided, and she wore a small turban of the same dull hue relieved only by a suspicion of white feather in the side Her face had neither regularity of feature nor beauty of complexion, but her expression was sweet and amiable, and her large blue eyes were singularly spiritual and sympathetic In an experience of women which extends over many nations and three separate continents I have never looked upon a face which gave a clearer promise of a refined and sensitive nature I could not but observe that as she took the seat which Sherlock Holmes placed for her, her lip trembled her hand quivered and she showed every sign of intense inward agitation

I have come to you Mr Holmes she said because you once enabled my employer, Mrs Cecil Forrester, to unravel a little domestic complication She was much impressed by your kindness and skill

Mrs Cecil Forrester, he repeated thoughtfully I believe that I was of some slight service to her The case however as I remember it, was a very simple one

She did not think so But at least you cannot say the same of mine I can hardly imagine anything more strange more utterly inexplicable than the situation in which I find myself

Holmes rubbed his hands and his eyes glistened He

leaned for a d ir s chair with an expression of extra ordinary concentra ion upon his clear cut hawk like features

State your case said he in brisk business tones

I felt that my position was an embarrassing one

You will, I am sure excuse me I said, rising from my chair

To my surprise the young lady held up her gloved hand to detain me

If your friend she said would be good enough to stop he might be of inestimable service to me

I relapsed into my chair

Briefly she continued the facts are these My father was an officer in an Indian regiment who sent me home when I was quite a child My mother was dead and I had no relative in England I was placed however in a comfortable boarding establishment at Edinburgh and there I remained until I was seventeen years of age In the year 1878 my father who was senior captain of his regiment obtained twelve months leave and came home He telegraphed to me from London that he had arrived all safe and directed me to come down at once giving the Langham Hotel as his address His message as I remember was full of kindness and love On reaching London I drove to the Langham and was informed that Captain Morstan was staying there but that he had gone out the night before and had not returned I waited all day without news of him That night on the advice of the manager of the hotel I com municated with the police and next morning we advertised in all the papers Our inquiries led to no result and from that day to this no word has ever been heard of my unfortunate father He came home with his heart full of hope to find some peace some comfort and instead –

She put her hand to her throat and a choking sob cut short the sentence

The date? asked Holmes opening his notebook

He disappeared upon the third of December, 1878 – nearly ten years ago

His luggage?

Remained at the hotel There was nothing in it to suggest a clue – some clothes some books, and a considerable number of curiosities from the Andaman Islands He had been one of the officers in charge of the convict guard there

Had he any friends in town?

Only one that we know of – Major Sholto of his own regiment the Thirty-fourth Bombay Infantry The major had retired some little time before and lived at Upper Norwood We communicated with him of course but he did not even know that his brother officer was in England

A singular case remarked Holmes

I have not yet described to you the most singular part About six years ago – to be exact, upon the fourth of May 1882 – an advertisement appeared in *The Times* asking for the address of Miss Mary Morstan and stating that it would be to her advantage to come forward There was no name or address appended I had at that time just entered the family of Mrs Cecil Forrester in the capacity of governess By her advice I published my address in the advertisement column The same day there arrived through the post a small cardboard box addressed to me which I found to contain a very large lustrous pearl No word of writing was enclosed Since then every year upon the same date there has always appeared a similar box containing a similar pearl without any clue as to the sender They have been pronounced by an expert to be of a rare variety and of considerable value You can see for yourself that they are very handsome

She opened a flat box as she spoke and showed me six of the finest pearls that I had ever seen

'Your statement is most interesting said Sherlock Holmes Has anything else occurred to you?

'Yes and no later than to-day That is why I have come to you This morning I received this letter, which you will perhaps read for yourself

'Thank you said Holmes The envelope too please Post mark London S W Date, July 7 Hum' Man s thumb mark on corner – probably postman Bes quality paper Envelopes at sixpence a packet Particular man in his stationery No address

> Be at the third pillar from the left outside the Lyceum Theatre to-night at seven o clock If you are distrustful bring two friends You are a wronged woman and shall have justice Do not bring police If you do, all will be in vain Your unknown friend

Well really this is a very pretty little mystery! What do you intend to do Miss Morstan?

'That is exactly what I want to ask you

'Then we shall most certainly go – you and I and – yes why Dr Watson is the very man Your correspondent says two friends He and I have worked together before

But would he come? she asked with something appealing in her voice and expression

I shall be proud and happy, said I fervently if I can be of any service

'You are both very kind she answered I have led a retired life and have no friends whom I could appeal to If I am here at six i will do I suppose?

'You must not be later said Holmes 'There is one other point however Is this handwriting the same as that upon the pearl box addresses?

I have them here, she answered producing half a dozen pieces of paper

'You are certainly a model client You have the correct intuition Let us see now He spread out the papers upon the table and gave little darting glances from one to the

other They are disguised hands except the letter he said presently but there can be no question as to the authorship See how the irrepressible Greek *e* will break out and see the twirl of the final *s* They are undoubtedly by the same person I should not like to suggest false hopes, Miss Morstan, but is there any resemblance between this hand and that of your father?

Nothing could be more unlike

I expected to hear you say so We shall look out for you then at six Pray allow me to keep the papers I may look into the matter before then It is only half past three Au revoir then

Au revoir said our visitor and with a bright, kindly glance from one to the other of us she replaced her pearl box in her bosom and hurried away

Standing at the window, I watched her walking briskly down the street until the grey turban and white feather were but a speck in the sombre crowd

'What a very attractive woman! I exclaimed turning to my companion

He had lit his pipe again and was leaning back with drooping eyelids Is she? he said languidly, I did not observe

'You really are an automaton – a calculating machine I cried There is something positively inhuman in you at times

He smiled gently

It is of the first importance he cried not to allow your judgment to be biased by personal qualities A client is to me a mere unit a factor in a problem The emotional qualities are antagonistic to clear reasoning I assure you that the most winning woman I ever knew was hanged for poisoning three little children for their insurance money and the most repellent man of my acquaintance is a philanthropist who has spent nearly a quarter of a million upon the London poor

In this case, however

I never make exceptions An exception disproves the rule Have you ever had occasion to study character in handwriting? What do you make of this fellow s scribble?

It is legible and regular I answered A man of business habits and some force of character

Holmes shook his head

Look at his long letters he said They hardly rise above the common herd That *d* might be an *a* and that *l* an *e* Men of character always differentiate their long letters however illegibly they may write There is vacillation in his *k* s and self esteem in his capitals I am going out now I have some few references to make Let me recommend this book – one of the most remarkable ever penned It is Winwood Reade s *Martyrdom of Man* I shall be back in an hour

I sat in the window with the volume in my hand but my thoughts were far from the daring speculations of the writer My mind ran upon our late visitor – her smiles the deep rich tones of her voice the strange mystery which overhung her life If she were seventeen at the time of her father s disappearance she must be seven and twenty now – a sweet age when youth has lost its self consciousness and become a little sobered by experience So I sat and mused until such dangerous thoughts came into my head that I hurried away to my desk and plunged furiously into the latest treatise upon pathology What was I an army surgeon with a weak leg and a weaker banking account that I should dare to think of such things? She was a unit a factor – nothing more If my future were black it was better surely to face it like a man than to attempt to brighten it by mere will-o the wisps of the imagination

In Quest of a Solution

It was half past five before Holmes returned He was bright eager, and in excellent spirits a mood which in his case alternated with fits of the blackest depression

There is no great mystery in this matter he said taking the cup of tea which I had poured out for him the facts appear to admit of only one explanation

What! you have solved it already?

Well that would be too much to say I have discovered a suggestive fact that is all It is however *very* suggestive The details are still to be added I have just found on consulting the back files of *The Times* that Major Sholto of Upper Norwood late of the Thirty-fourth Bombay Infantry died upon the twenty eighth of April, 1882

I may be very obtuse Holmes but I fail to see what this suggests

No? You surprise me Look at it in this way then Captain Morstan disappears The only person in London whom he could have visited is Major Sholto Major Sholto denies having heard that he was in London Four years later Sholto dies *Within a week of his death* Captain Morstan s daughter receives a valuable present which is repeated from year to year and now culminates in a letter which describes her as a wronged woman What wrong can it refer to except this deprivation of her father? And why should the presents begin immediately after Sholto s death unless it is that Sholto s heir knows something of the mystery and desires to make compensation? Have you any alternative theory which will meet the facts?

But what a strange compensation! And how strangely made! Why too should he write a letter now rather

than six years ago? Again the letter speaks of giving her justice What justice can she have? It is too much to suppose that her father is still alive There is no other injustice in her case that you know of

There are difficulties there are certainly difficulties said Sherlock Holmes pensively but our expedition of to night will solve them all Ah, here is a four wheeler, and Miss Morstan is inside Are you all ready? Then we had better go down for it is a little past the hour

I picked up my hat and my heaviest stick but I observed that Holmes took his revolver from his drawer and slipped it into his pocket It was clear that he thought that our night s work might be a serious one

Miss Morstan was muffled in a dark cloak and her sensitive face was composed but pale She must have been more than woman if she did not feel some uneasiness at the strange enterprise upon which we were embarking yet her self control was perfect and she readily answered the few additional questions which Sherlock Holmes put to her

Major Sholto was a very particular friend of Papa s she said His letters were full of allusions to the major He and Papa were in command of the troops at the Andaman Islands so they were thrown a great deal together By the way a curious paper was found in Papa s desk which no one could understand I don t suppose that it is of the slightest importance but I thought you might care to see it so I brought it with me It is here

Holmes unfolded the paper carefully and smoothed it out upon his knee He then very methodically examined it all over with his double lens

It is paper of native Indian manufacture he re marked It has at some time been pinned to a board The Diagram upon it appears to be a plan of part of a large building with numerous halls corridors and passages At one point is a small cross done in red ink and above

it is 3 37 from left in faded pencil writing In the left-hand corner is a curious hieroglyphic like four crosses in a line with their arms touching Beside it is written in very rough and coarse characters 'The sign of the four – Jonathan Small Mahomet Singh, Abdullah Khan Dost Akbar No I confess that I do not see how this bears upon the matter Yet it is evidently a document of importance It has been kept carefully in a pocketbook for the one side is as clean as the other

It was in his pocketbook that we found it

Preserve it carefully then, Miss Morstan for it may prove to be of use to us I begin to suspect that this matter may turn out to be much deeper and more subtle than I at first supposed I must reconsider my ideas

He leaned back in the cab and I could see by his drawn brow and his vacant eye that he was thinking intently Miss Morstan and I chatted in an undertone about our present expedition and its possible outcome but our companion maintained his impenetrable reserve until the end of our journey

It was a September evening and not yet seven o clock but the day had been a dreary one and a dense drizzly fog lay low upon the great city Mud coloured clouds drooped sadly over the muddy streets Down the Strand the lamps were but misty splotches of diffused light which threw a feeble circular glimmer upon the slimy pavement The yellow glare from the shop-windows streamed out into the steamy vaporous air and threw a murky shifting radiance across the crowded thoroughfare There was to my mind something eerie and ghostlike in the endless procession of faces which flitted across these narrow bars of light – sad faces and glad haggard and merry Like all humankind they flitted from the gloom into the light and so back into the gloom once more I am not subject to impressions but the dull heavy evening, with the strange business upon which we were engaged, combined to make me nervous

and depressed I could see from Miss Morstan s manner that she was suffering from the same feeling Holmes alone could rise superior to petty influences He held his open notebook upon his knee and from time to time he jotted down figures and memoranda in the light of his pocket-lantern

At the Lyceum Theatre the crowds were already thick at the side entrances In front a continuous stream of hansoms and four wheelers were rattling up discharging their cargoes of shirt fronted men and beshawled be diamonded women We had hardly reached the third pillar which was our rendezvous before a small dark brisk man in the dress of a coachman accosted us

Are you the parties who come with Miss Morstan? he asked

I am Miss Morstan and these two gentlemen are my friends said she

He bent a pair of wonderfully penetrating and questioning eyes upon us

You will excuse me miss he said with a certain dogged manner but I was to ask you to give me your word that neither of your companions is a police-officer

I give you my word on that she answered

He gave a shrill whistle on which a street Arab led across a four wheeler and opened the door The man who had addressed us mounted to the box while we took our places inside We had hardly done so before the driver whipped up his horse and we plunged away at a furious pace through the foggy streets

The situation was a curious one We were driving to an unknown place on an unknown errand Yet our invitation was either a complete hoax – which was an inconceivable hypothesis – or else we had good reason to think that important issues might hang upon our journey Miss Morstan s demeanour was as resolute and collected as ever I endeavoured to cheer and amuse her by reminiscences of my adventures in Afghanistan but

to tell the truth, I was myself so excited at our situation and so curious as to our destination that my stories were slightly involved To this day she declares that I told her one moving anecdote as to how a musket looked into my tent at the dead of night and how I fired a double-barrelled tiger cub at it At first I had some idea as to the direction in which we were driving but soon what with ou pace the fog and my own limited knowledge of London I lost my bearings and knew nothing save that we seemed to be going a very long way Sherlock Holmes was never at fault, however and he muttered the names as the cab rattled through squares and in and out by tortuous by streets

Rochester Row said he Now Vincent Square Now we come out on the Vauxhall Bridge Road We are making for the Surrey side apparently Yes I thought so Now we are on the bridge You can catch glimpses of the river

We did indeed get a fleeting view of a stretch of the Thames with the lamps shining upon the broad silent water but our cab dashed on and was soon involved in a labyrinth of streets upon the other side

Wordsworth Road said my companion Priory Road Lark Hall Lane Stockwell Place Robert Street Cold Harbour Lane Our quest does not appear to take us to very fashionable regions.

We had indeed reached a questionable and forbidding neighbourhood Long lines of dull brick houses were only relieved by the coarse glare and tawdry brilliancy of public-houses at the corner Then came rows of two-storeyed villas each with a fronting of miniature garden, and then again interminable lines of new staring brick buildings – the monster tentacles which the giant city was throwing out into the country At last the cab drew up at the third house in a new terrace None of the other houses were inhabited and that at which we stopped was as dark as its neighbours save for a single glimmer

in the kitchen-window On our knocking however, the door was instantly thrown open by a Hindoo servant clad in a yellow turban white loose fitting clothes and a yellow sash There was something strangely incongruous in this Oriental figure framed in the commonplace doorway of a third rate suburban dwelling house

The sahib awaits you said he, and even as he spoke there came a high piping voice from some inner room

Show them in to me *khitmutgar*, it said Show them straight in to me

4

The Story of the Bald-headed Man

We followed the Indian down a sordid and common passage, ill lit and worse furnished until he came to a door upon the right which he threw open A blaze of yellow light streamed out upon us and in the centre of the glare there stood a small man with a very high head, a bristle of red hair all round the fringe of it, and a bald, shining scalp which shot out from among it like a mountain peak from fir trees He writhed his hands together as he stood and his features were in a perpetual jerk – now smiling now scowling but never for an instant in repose Nature had given him a pendulous lip, and a too visible line of yellow and irregular teeth, which he strove feebly to conceal by constantly passing his hand over the lower part of his face In spite of his obtrusive baldness he gave the impression of youth In point of fact he had just turned his thirtieth year

Your servant, Miss Morstan he kept repeating in a thin high voice Your servant, gentlemen Pray step into my little sanctum A small place miss but furnished to my own liking An oasis of art in the howling desert of South London

We were all astonished by the appearance of the apartment into which he invited us In that sorry house it looked as out of place as a diamond of the first water in a setting of brass The richest and glossiest of curtains and tapestries draped the walls looped back here and there to expose some richly mounted painting or Oriental vase The carpet was of amber and black so soft and so thick that the foot sank pleasantly into it as into a bed of moss Two great tiger skins thrown athwart it increased the suggestion of Eastern luxury, as did a huge

could have happened Never for an instant did we suspect that he had the whole secret hidden in his own breast, that of all men he alone knew the fate of Arthur Morstan

We did know, however that some mystery some positive danger, overhung our father He was very fearful of going out alone, and he always employed two prize fighters to act as porters at Pondicherry Lodge Williams, who drove you tonight, was one of them He was once lightweight champion of England Our father would never tell us what it was he feared, but he had a most marked aversion to men with wooden legs On one occasion he actually fired his revolver at a wooden legged man who proved to be a harmless tradesman canvassing for orders We had to pay a large sum to hush the matter up My brother and I used to think this a mere whim of my father s but events have since led us to change our opinion

Early in 1882 my father received a letter from India which was a great shock to him He nearly fainted at the breakfast table when he opened it, and from that day he sickened to his death What was in the letter we could never discover, but I could see as he held it that it was short and written in a scrawling hand He had suffered for years from an enlarged spleen, but he now became rapidly worse and towards the end of April we were informed that he was beyond all hope and that he wished to make a last communication to us

When we entered his room he was propped up with pillows and breathing heavily He besought us to lock the door and to come upon either side of the bed Then grasping our hands he made a remarkable statement to us in a voice which was broken as much by emotion as by pain I shall try and give it to you in his own very words

"I have only one thing, he said which weighs upon my mind at this supreme moment It is my treatment of poor Morstan s orphan The cursed greed which has been

the least question about the Bouguereau I am partial to the modern French school

You will excuse me, Mr Sholto said Miss Morstan, but I am here at your request to learn something which you desire to tell me It is very late and I should desire the interview to be as short as possible

At the best it must take some time he answered for we shall certainly have to go to Norwood and see Brother Bartholomew We shall all go and try if we can get the better of Brother Bartholomew He is very angry with me for taking the course which has seemed right to me I had quite high words with him last night You cannot imagine what a terrible fellow he is when he is angry

If we are to go to Norwood it would perhaps be as well to start at once I ventured to remark

He laughed until his ears were quite red

That would hardly do he cried I don t know what he would say if I brought you in that sudden way No I must prepare you by showing you how we all stand to each other In the first place I must tell you that there are several points in the story of which I am myself ignorant I can only lay the facts before you as far as I know them myself

My father was as you may have guessed Major John Sholto once of the Indian Army He retired some eleven years ago and came to live at Pondicherry Lodge in Upper Norwood He had prospered in India and brought back with him a considerable sum of money a large collection of valuable curiosities and a staff of native servants With these advantages he bought him self a house and lived in great luxury My twin brother Bartholomew and I were the only children

I very well remember the sensation which was caused by the disappearance of Captain Morstan We read the details in the papers and knowing that he had been a friend of our father s we discussed the case freely in his presence He used to join in our speculations as to what

could have happened Never for an instant did we suspect that he had the whole secret hidden in his own breast, that of all men he alone knew the fate of Arthur Morstan

We did know however that some mystery some positive danger overhung our father He was very fearful of going out alone and he always employed two prize fighters to act as porters at Pondicherry Lodge Williams who drove you tonight was one of them He was once lightweight champion of England Our father would never tell us what it was he feared but he had a most marked aversion to men with wooden legs On one occasion he actually fired his revolver at a wooden legged man, who proved to be a harmless tradesman canvassing for orders We had to pay a large sum to hush the matter up My brother and I used to think this a mere whim of my father s but events have since led us to change our opinion

Early in 1882 my father received a letter from India which was a great shock to him He nearly fainted at the breakfast table when he opened it and from that day he sickened to his death What was in the letter we could never discover, but I could see as he held it that it was short and written in a scrawling hand He had suffered for years from an enlarged spleen but he now became rapidly worse and towards the end of April we were informed that he was beyond all hope and that he wished to make a last communication to us

When we entered his room he was propped up with pillows and breathing heavily He besought us to lock the door and to come upon either side of the bed Then grasping our hands he made a remarkable statement to us in a voice which was broken as much by emotion as by pain I shall try and give it to you in his own very words

"I have only one thing he said which weighs upon my mind at this supreme moment It is my treatment of poor Morstan s orphan The cursed greed which has been

my besetting sin through life has withheld from her the treasure half at least of which should have been hers And yet I have made no use of it myself so blind and foolish a thing is avarice The mere feeling of possession has been so dear to me that I could not bear to share it with another See that chaplet tipped with pearls beside the quinine bottle Even that I could not bear to part with although I had got it out with the design of sending it to her You my sons will give her a fair share of the Agra treasure But send her nothing – not even the chaplet – until I am gone After all men have been as bad as this and have recovered

I will tell you how Morstan died he continued He had suffered for years from a weak heart but he concealed it from every one I alone knew it When in India, he and I through a remarkable chain of circum stances came into possession of a considerable treasure I brought it over to England and on the night of Morstan s arrival he came straight over here to claim his share He walked over from the station and was ad mitted by my faithful old Lal Chowdar who is now dead Morstan and I had a difference of opinion as to the division of the treasure and we came to heated words Morstan had sprung out of his chair in a paroxysm of anger when he suddenly pressed his hand to his side his face turned a dusky hue and he fell backward cutting his head against the corner of the treasure chest When I stooped over him I found to my horror that he was dead

For a long time I sat half distracted wondering what I should do My first impulse was of course to call for assistance but I could not but recognize that there was every chance that I would be accused of his murder His death at the moment of a quarrel and the gash in his head would be black against me Again an official inquiry could not be made without bringing out some facts about the treasure which I was particularly anxious

to keep secret He had told me that no soul upon earth knew where he had gone There seemed to be no necessity why any soul ever should know

I was still pondering over the matter when looking up I saw my servant Lal Chowdar in the doorway He stole in and bolted the door behind him Do not fear sahib he said no one need know that you have killed him Let us hide him away, and who is the wiser? I did not kill him said I Lal Chowdar shook his head and smiled I heard it all sahib, said he I heard you quarrel, and I heard the blow But my lips are sealed All are asleep in the house Let us put him away together That was enough to decide me If my own servant could not believe my innocence, how could I hope to make it good before twelve foolish tradesmen in a jury box? Lal Chowdar and I disposed of the body that night and within a few days the London papers were full of the mysterious disappearance of Captain Morstan You will see from what I say that I can hardly be blamed in the matter My fault lies in the fact that we concealed not only the body but also the treasure and that I have clung to Morstan s share as well as to my own I wish you herefore to make restitution Put your ears down to my mouth The treasure is hidden in –

At this instant a horrible change came over his expression, his eyes stared wildly his jaw dropped and he yelled in a voice which I can never forget, Keep him out! For Christ s sake keep him out! We both stared round at the window behind us upon which his gaze was fixed A face was looking in at us out of the darkness We could see the whitening of the nose where it was pressed against the glass It was a bearded hairy face with wild cruel eyes and an expression of concentrated malevolence My brother and I rushed towards the window but the man was gone When we returned to my father his head had dropped and his pulse had ceased to beat

'We searched the garden that night but found no sign of the intruder save that just under the window a single foot mark was visible in the flower bed But for that one trace, we might have thought that our imaginations had conjured up that wild fierce face We soon however had another and a more striking proof that there were secret agencies at work all round us The window of my father s room was found open in the morning his cupboards and boxes had been rifled and upon his chest was fixed a torn piece of paper with the words The sign of the four scrawled across it What the phrase meant or who our secret visitor may have been, we never knew As far as we can judge none of my father s property had been actually stolen though everything had been turned out My brother and I naturally associated this peculiar incident with the fear which haunted my father during his life but it is still a complete mystery to us

The little man stopped to relight his hookah and puffed thoughtfully for a few moments We had all sat absorbed listening to his extraordinary narrative At the short account of her fathers death Miss Morstan had turned deadly white and for a moment I feared that she was about to faint She rallied however on drinking a glass of water which I quietly poured out for her from a Venetian carafe upon the side table Sherlock Holmes leaned back in his chair with an abstracted expression and the lids drawn low over his glittering eyes As I glanced at him I could not but think how on that very day he had complained bitterly of the commonplaceness of life Here at least was a problem which would tax his sagacity to the utmost Mr Thaddeus Sholto looked from one to the other of us with an obvious pride at the effect which his story had produced and then continued between the puffs of his overgrown pipe

My brother and I said he were as you may imagine much excited as to the treasure which my father had spoken of For weeks and for months we dug

and delved in every part of the garden without discovering its whereabouts It was maddening to think that the hiding place was on his very lips at the moment that he died We could judge the splendour of the missing riches by the chaplet which he had taken out Over this chaplet my brother Bartholomew and I had some little discussion The pearls were evidently of great value, and he was averse to part with them for between friends my brother was himself a little inclined to my father s fault He thought, too that if we parted with the chaplet it might give rise to gossip and finally bring us into trouble It was all that I could do to persuade him to let me find out Miss Morstan s address and send her a detached pearl at fixed intervals so that at least she might never feel destitute

It was a kindly thought said our companion earnestly, it was extremely good of you

The little man waved his hand deprecatingly

We were your trustees, he said that was the view which I took of it though Brother Bartholomew could not altogether see it in that light We had plenty of money ourselves I desired no more Besides, it would have been such bad taste to have treated a young lady in so scurvy a fashion *Le mauvais gout mène au crime* The French have a very neat way of putting these things Our difference of opinion on this subject went so far that I thought it best to set up rooms for myself, so I left Pondicherry Lodge, taking the old *khitmutgar* and Williams with me Yesterday, however I learned that an event of extreme importance has occurred The treasure has been discovered I instantly communicated with Miss Morstan and it only remains for us to drive out to Norwood and demand our share I explained my views last night to Brother Bartholomew so we shall be expected if not welcome, visitors

Mr Thaddeus Sholto ceased and sat twitching on his luxurious settee We all remained silent with our

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thoughts upon the new development which the mysteri ous business had taken Holmes was the first to spring to his feet

You have done well sir from first to last said he It is possible that we may be able to make you some small return by throwing some light upon that which is still dark to you But as Miss Morstan remarked just now it is late and we had best put the matter through without delay

Our new acquaintance very deliberately coiled up the tube of his hookah and produced from behind a curtain a very long befrogged topcoat with astrakhan collar and cuffs This he buttoned tightly up in spite of the extreme closeness of the night and finished his attire by putting on a rabbit skin cap with hanging lappets which covered the ears so that no part of him was visible save his mobile and peaky face

My health is somewhat fragile he remarked as he led the way down the passage I am compelled to be a valetudinarian

Our cab was awaiting us outside and our programme was evidently prearranged for the driver started off at once at a rapid pace Thaddeus Sholto talked incessantly in a voice which rose high above the rattle of the wheels

Bartholomew is a clever fellow said he How do you think he found out where the treasure was? He had come to the conclusion that it was somewhere indoors so he worked out all the cubic space of the house and made measurements everywhere so that not one inch should be unaccounted for Among other things he found that the height of the building was seventy four feet but on adding together the heights of all the separate rooms and making every allowance for the space between which he ascertained by borings he could not bring the total to more than seventy feet There were four feet unaccounted for These could only be at the top of the building He knocked a hole therefore in the lath and plaster ceiling

of the highest room, and there sure enough he came upon another little garret above it, which had been sealed up and was known to no one In the centre stood the treasure chest resting upon two rafters He lowered it through the hole and there it lies He computes the value of the jewels at not less than half a million sterling

At the mention of this gigantic sum we all stared at one another open eyed Miss Morstan could we secure her rights would change from a needy governess to the richest heiress in England Surely it was the place of a loyal friend to rejoice at such news yet I am ashamed to say that selfishness took me by the soul and that my heart turned as heavy as lead within me I stammered out some few halting words of congratulation and then sat downcast with my head drooped deaf to the babble of our new acquaintance He was clearly a confirmed hypochondriac, and I was dreamily conscious that he was pouring forth interminable trains of symptoms and imploring information as to the composition and action of innumerable quack nostrums some of which he bore about in a leather case in his pocket I trust that he may not remember any of the answers which I gave him that night Holmes declares that he overheard me caution him against the great danger of taking more than two drops of castor-oil while I recommended strychnine in large doses as a sedative However that may be I was certainly relieved when our cab pulled up with a jerk and the coachman sprang down to open the door

This Miss Morstan is Pondicherry Lodge said Mr Thaddeus Sholto as he handed her out

5

The Tragedy of Pondicherry Lodge

It was nearly eleven o clock when we reached this final stage of our night s adventures We had left the damp fog of the great city behind us and the night was fairly fine A warm wind blew from the westward and heavy clouds moved slowly across the sky with half a moon peeping occasionally through the rifts It was clear enough to see for some distance, but Thaddeus Sholto took down one of the side lamps from the carriage to give us a better light upon our way

Pondicherry Lodge stood in its own grounds and was girt round with a very high stone wall topped with broken glass A single narrow iron clamped door formed the only means of entrance On this our guide knocked with a peculiar postman like rat tat

Who is there? cried a gruff voice from within

It is I McMurdo You surely know my knock by this time

There was a grumbling sound and a clanking and jarring of keys The door swung heavily back and a short deep-chested man stood in the opening with the yellow light of the lantern shining upon his protruded face and twinkling distrustful eyes

'That you Mr Thaddeus? But who are the others? I had no orders about them from the master

No McMurdo? You surprise me! I told my brother last night that I should bring some friends

He hain t been out o his rooms to-day Mr Thaddeus and I have no orders You know very well that I must stick to regulations I can let you in but your friends they must just stop where they are

This was an unexpected obstacle Thaddeus Sholto

looked about him in a perplexed and helpless manner

'This is too bad of you, McMurdo' he said If I guarantee them that is enough for you There is the young lady too She cannot wait on the public road at this hour

'Very sorry Mr Thaddeus said the porter inexorably Folk may be friends o yours and yet no friend o the master s He pays me well to do my duty and my duty I ll do I don t know none o your friends

Oh yes you do, McMurdo cried Sherlock Holmes genially I don t think you can have forgotten me Don t you remember that amateur who fought three rounds with you at Alison s rooms on the night of your benefit four years back?

Not Mr Sherlock Holmes' roared the prize fighter God s truth' how could I have mistook you? If instead o standin there so quiet you had just stepped up and given me that cross hit of yours under the jaw I d ha *known you without a question Ah you re one that has* wasted your gifts, you have' You might have aimed high if you had joined the fancy

'You see Watson if all else fails me I have still one of the scientific professions open to me said Holmes laughing Our friend won t keep us out in the cold now I am sure

In you come sir in you come – you and your friends he answered Very sorry Mr Thaddeus, but orders are very strict Had to be certain of your friends before I let them in

Inside, a gravel path wound through desolate grounds to a huge clump of a house square and prosaic all plunged in shadow save where a moonbeam struck one corner and glimmered in a garret window The vast size of the building with its gloom and its deathly silence struck a chill to the heart Even Thaddeus Sholto seemed ill at ease and the lantern quivered and rattled in his hand

I cannot understand it, he said There must be some mistake I distinctly told Bartholomew that we should be here and yet there is no light in his window I do not know what to make of it

Does he always guard the premises in this way? asked Holmes

Yes he has followed my father s custom He was the favourite son you know and I sometimes think that my father may have told him more than he ever told me That is Bartholomew s window up there where the moonshine strikes It is quite bright but there is no light from within I think

None said Holmes But I see the glint of a light in that little window beside the door

Ah that is the housekeeper s room That is where old Mrs Bernstone sits She can tell us all about it But perhaps you would not mind waiting here for a minute or two for if we all go in together and she has had no word of our coming she may be alarmed But hush! what is that?

He held up the lantern and his hand shook until the circles of light flickered and wavered all round us Miss Morstan seized my wrist and we all stood with thumping hearts straining our ears From the great black house there sounded through the silent night the saddest and most pitiful of sounds – the shrill broken whimpering of a frightened woman

It is Mrs Bernstone said Sholto She is the only woman in the house Wait here I shall be back in a moment

He hurried for the door and knocked in his peculiar way We could see a tall old woman admit him and sway with pleasure at the very sight of him

Oh Mr Thaddeus sir I am so glad you have come! I am so glad you have come Mr Thaddeus sir!

We heard her reiterated rejoicings until the door was closed and her voice died away into a muffled monotone

Our guide had left us the lantern Holmes swung it slowly round and peered keenly at the house and at the great rubbish-heaps which cumbered the grounds Miss Morstan and I stood together and her hand was in mine A wondrous subtle thing is love for here were we two who had never seen each other before that day between whom no word or even look of affection had ever passed, and yet now in an hour of trouble our hands instinctively sought for each other I have marvelled at it since, but at the time it seemed the most natural thing that I should go out to her so and as she has often told me, there was in her also the instinct to turn to me for comfort and protection So we stood hand in hand like two children, and there was peace in our hearts for all the dark things that surrounded us

What a strange place' she said looking round

It looks as though all the moles in England had been let loose in it I have seen something of the sort on the side of a hill near Ballarart, where the prospectors had been at work

And from the same cause, said Holmes These are the traces of the treasure-seekers You must remember that they were six years looking for it No wonder that the grounds look like a gravel pit

At that moment the door of the house burst open and Thaddeus Sholto came running out with his hands thrown forward and terror in his eyes

'There is something amiss with Bartholomew' he cried I am frightened' My nerves cannot stand it

He was indeed half blubbering with fear and his twitching feeble face peeping out from the great astrakhan collar had the helpless, appealing expression of a terrified child

Come into the house said Holmes in his crisp firm way

'Yes do' pleaded Thaddeus Sholto I really do not feel equal to giving directions

We all followed him into the housekeeper s room which stood upon the left-hand side of the passage The old woman was pacing up and down with a scared look and restless picking fingers but the sight of Miss Morstan appeared to have a soothing effect upon her

God bless your sweet calm face' she cried with a hysterical sob It does me good to see you Oh but I have been sorely tried this day'

Our companion patted her thin work worn hand and murmured some few words of kindly womanly comfort which brought the colour back into the other s bloodless cheeks

Master has locked himself in and will not answer me she explained All day I have waited to hear from him for he often likes to be alone but an hour ago I feared that something was amiss so I went up and peeped through the keyhole You must go up Mr Thaddeus – you must go up and look for yourself I have seen Mr Bartholomew Sholto in joy and in sorrow for ten long years, but I never saw him with such a face on him as that

Sherlock Holmes took the lamp and led the way for Thaddeus Sholto s teeth were chattering in his head So shaken was he that I had to pass my hand under his arm as we went up the stairs for his knees were trembling under him Twice as we ascended Holmes whipped his lens out of his pocket and carefully examined marks which appeared to me to be mere shapeless smudges of dust upon the cocoanut matting which served as a stair carpet He walked slowly from step to step holding the lamp low and shooting keen glances to right and left Miss Morstan had remained behind with the frightened housekeeper

The third flight of stairs ended in a straight passage of some length with a great picture in Indian tapestry upon the right of it and three doors upon the left

Holmes advanced along it in the same slow and methodical way while we kept close at his heels with our long black shadows streaming backward down the corridor The third door was that which we were seeking Holmes knocked without receiving any answer and then tried to turn the handle and force it open It was locked on the inside however and by a broad and powerful bolt as we could see when we set our lamp up against it The key being turned however, the hole was not entirely closed Sherlock Holmes bent down to it and instantly rose again with a sharp intaking of the breath

'There is something devilish in this Watson said he more moved than I had ever before seen him What do you make of it?

I stooped to the hole and recoiled in horror Moonlight was streaming into the room and it was bright with a vague and shifty radiance Looking straight at me and suspended as it were in the air for all beneath was in shadow, there hung a face – the very face of our companion Thaddeus There was the same high shining head the same circular bristle of red hair the same bloodless countenance The features were set however in a horrible smile a fixed and unnatural grin, which in that still and moonlit room was more jarring to the nerves than any scowl or contortion So like was the face to that of our little friend that I looked round at him to make sure that he was indeed with us Then I recalled to mind hat he had mentioned to us that his brother and he were twins

'This is terrible' I said to Holmes What is to be done?

'The door must come down he answered and springing against it he put all his weight upon the lock

It creaked and groaned but did not yield Together we flung ourselves upon it once more and this time it gave

way with a sudden snap and we found ourselves within Bartholomew Sholto's chamber

It appeared to have been fitted up as a chemical laboratory A double line of glass stoppered bottles was drawn up upon the wall opposite the door and the table was littered over with Bunsen burners test tubes and retorts In the corners stood carboys of acid in wicker baskets One of these appeared to leak or to have been broken for a stream of dark-coloured liquid had trickled out from it and the air was heavy with a peculiarly pungent tarlike odour A set of steps stood at one side of the room in the midst of a litter of lath and plaster and above them there was an opening in the ceiling large enough for a man to pass through At the foot of the steps a long coil of rope was thrown carelessly together

By the table in a wooden armchair the master of the house was seated all in a heap with his head sunk upon his left shoulder and that ghastly inscrutable smile upon his face He was stiff and cold and had clearly been dead many hours It seemed to me that not only his features but all his limbs were twisted and turned in the most fantastic fashion By his hand upon the table there lay a peculiar instrument – a brown close grained stick with a stone head like a hammer rudely lashed on with coarse twine Beside it was a torn sheet of notepaper with some words scrawled upon it Holmes glanced at it and then handed *it to me*

'You see he said with a *significant raising* of the eyebrows

In the light of the lantern I read with a thrill of horror 'The sign *of the four*

In God's name what does it all mean? I asked

It means murder said he stooping over the dead *man* Ah! I expected it Look here!

He pointed to what looked like a long dark thorn stuck in the skin just above the ear

It looks like a thorn, said I

It is a thorn You may pick it out But be careful for it is poisoned

I took it up between my finger and thumb It came away from the skin so readily that hardly any mark was left behind One tiny speck of blood showed where the puncture had been

This is all an insoluble mystery to me said I It grows darker instead of clearer

On the contrary he answered it clears every instant I only require a few missing links to have an entirely connected case

We had almost forgotten our companion s presence since we entered the chamber He was still standing in the doorway the very picture of terror, wringing his hands and moaning to himself Suddenly however he broke out into a sharp querulous cry

The treasure is gone! he said They have robbed him of the treasure! There is the hole through which we lowered it I helped him to do it! I was the last person who saw him! I left him here last night, and I heard him lock the door as I came downstairs

What time was that?

It was ten o clock And now he is dead and the police will be called in and I shall be suspected of having had a hand in it Oh, yes I am sure I shall But *you don t think so gentlemen? Surely you don t think* that it was I? Is it likely that I would have brought you here if it were I? Oh dear! oh dear! I know that I shall go mad!

He jerked his arms and stamped his feet in a kind of convulsive frenzy

You have no reason for fear Mr Sholto said Holmes kindly, putting his hand upon his shoulder take my advice and drive down to the station to report the matter *to the police Offer to assist them in every way We shall* wait here until your return

The little man obeyed in a half stupefied fashion and we heard him stumbling down the stairs in the dark

6

Sherlock Holmes Gives a Demonstration

Now Watson said Holmes rubbing his hands, we have half an hour to ourselves Let us make good use of it My case is as I have told you almost complete but we must not err on the side of overconfidence Simple as the case seems now, there may be something deeper underlying it

Simple' I ejaculated

Surely said he with something of the air of a clinical professor expounding to his class Just sit in the corner there, that your footprints may not complicate matters Now to work' In the first place how did these folk come and how did they go? The door has not been opened since last night How of the window? He carried the lamp across to it, muttering his observations aloud the while but addressing them to himself rather than to me Window is snibbed on the inner side Framework is solid No hinges at the side Let us open it No water pipe near Roof quite out of reach Yet a man has mounted by the window It rained a little last night Here is the print of a foot in mould upon the sill And here is a circular muddy mark and here again upon the floor and here again by the table See here Watson' This is really a very pretty demonstration

I looked at the round well-defined muddy discs

That is not a foot mark said I

It is something much more valuable to us It is the impression of a wooden stump You see here on the sil' is the boot mark a heavy boot with a broad metal heel, and beside it is the mark of the timber toe

It is the wooden legged man

Quite so But there has been someone else – a very able and efficient ally Could you scale that wall Doctor?

I looked out of the open window The moon still shone brightly on that angle of the house We were a good sixty feet from the ground and look where I could, I could see no foothold nor as much as a crevice in the brickwork

It is absolutely impossible I answered

Without aid it is so But suppose you had a friend up here who lowered you this good stout rope which I see in the corner securing one end of it to this great hook in the wall Then, I think if you were an active man you might swarm up wooden leg and all You would depart of course in the same fashion and your ally would draw up the rope untie it from the hook shut the window snib it on the inside and get away in the way that he originally came As a minor point it may be noted he continued fingering the rope that our wooden legged friend, though a fair climber was not a professional sailor His hands were far from horny My lens discloses more than one blood mark especially towards the end of the rope from which I gather that he slipped down with such velocity that he took the skin off his hands

'This is all very well said I but the thing becomes more unintelligible than ever How about this mysterious ally? How came he into the room?

'Yes the ally' repeated Holmes pensively There are features of interest about this ally He lifts the case from the regions of the commonplace I fancy that this ally breaks fresh ground in the annals of crime in this country – though parallel cases suggest themselves from India and if my memory serves me from Senegambia

How came he then? I reiterated The door is locked the window is inaccessible Was it through the chimney?

'The grate is much too small he answered I had already considered that possibility

How then? I persisted

'You will not apply my precept he said shaking his head How often have I said to you that when you have eliminated the impossible whatever remains *however improbable* must be the truth? We know that he did not come through the door the window, or the chimney We also know that he could not have been concealed in the room, as there is no concealment possible Whence, then, did he come?

He came through the hole in the roof! I cried

Of course he did He must have done so If you will have the kindness to hold the lamp for me we shall now extend our researches to the room above – the secret room in which the treasure was found

He mounted the steps and, seizing a rafter with either hand he swung himself up into the garret Then lying on his face he reached down for the lamp and held it while I followed him

The chamber in which we found ourselves was about ten feet one way and six the other The floor was formed by the rafters with thin lath and plaster between so that in walking one had to step from beam to beam The roof ran up to an apex and was evidently the inner shell of the true roof of the house There was no furniture of any sort and the accumulated dust of years lay thick upon the floor

Here you are you see said Sherlock Holmes putting his hand against the sloping wall 'This is a trapdoor which leads out on to the roof I can press it back and here is the roof itself sloping at a gentle angle This then is the way by which Number One entered Let us see if we can find some other traces of his individuality?

He held down the lamp to the floor and as he did so I saw for the second time that night a startled surprised

look come over his face For myself, as I followed his gaze my skin was cold under my clothes The floor was covered thickly with the prints of a naked foot – clear well-defined perfectly formed but scarce half the size of those of an ordinary man

Holmes I said in a whisper a child has done this horrid thing

He had recovered his self possession in an instant

I was staggered for the moment he said but the thing is quite natural My memory failed me or I should have been able to foretell it There is nothing more to be learned here Let us go down

What is your theory then as to those foot marks? I asked eagerly when we had regained the lower room once more

My dear Watson try a little analysis yourself said he with a touch of impatience You know my methods Apply them and it will be instructive to compare results

I cannot conceive anything which will cover the facts, I answered

It will be clear enough to you soon he said, in an offhand way I think that there is nothing else of importance here but I will look

He whipped out his lens and a tape measure and hurried about the room on his knees measuring comparing examining with his long thin nose only a few inches from the planks and his beady eyes gleaming and deep-set like those of a bird So swift silent and furtive were his movements like those of a trained bloodhound picking out a scent that I could not but think what a terrible criminal he would have made had he turned his energy and sagacity against the law instead of exerting them in its defence As he hunted about he kept muttering to himself and finally he broke out into a loud crow of delight

We are certainly in luck said he 'We ought to have

very little trouble now Number One has had the misfortune to tread in the creosote You can see the outline of the edge of his small foot here at the side of this evil smelling mess The carboy has been cracked you see, and the stuff has leaked out

What then? I asked

Why we have got him that s all said he

I know a dog that would follow that scent to the world s end If a pack can track a trailed herring across a shire, how far can a specially trained hound follow so pungent a smell as this? It sounds like a sum in the rule of three The answer should give us the – But hallo! here are the accredited representatives of the law

Heavy steps and the clamour of loud voices were audible from below, and the hall door shut with a loud crash

Before they come said Holmes just put your hand here on this poor fellow s arm and here on his leg What do you feel?

'The muscles are as hard as a board I answered

Quite so They are in a state of extreme contraction far exceeding the usual rigor mortis Coupled with this distortion of the face this Hippocratic smile or *risus sardonicus*, as the old writers called it, what conclusion would it suggest to your mind?

'Death from some powerful vegetable alkaloid I answered some strychnine like substance which would produce tetanus

That was the idea which occurred to me the instant I saw the drawn muscles of the face On getting into the room I at once looked for the means by which the poison had entered the system As you saw I discovered a thorn which had been driven or shot with no great force into the scalp You observe that the part struck was that which would be turned towards the hole in the ceiling if the man were erect in his chair Now examine this thorn

I took it up gingerly and held it in the light of the lantern It was long sharp, and black with a glazed look near the point as though some gummy substance had dried upon it The blunt end had been trimmed and rounded off with a knife

Is that an English thorn? he asked

No, it certainly is not

With all these data you should be able to draw some just inference But here are the regulars so the auxiliary forces may beat a retreat

As he spoke the steps which had been coming nearer sounded loudly on the passage and a very stout portly man in a grey suit strode heavily into the room He was red faced burly and plethoric with a pair of very small twinkling eyes which looked keenly out from between swollen and puffy pouches He was closely followed by an inspector in uniform and by the still palpitating Thaddeus Sholto

Here s a business! he cried in a muffled husky voice Here s a pretty business! But who are all these? Why the house seems to be as full as a rabbit warren!

I think you must recollect me Mr Athelney Jones said Holmes quietly

Why of course I do! he wheezed It s Mr Sherlock Holmes the theorist Remember you! I ll never forget how you lectured us all on causes and inferences and effects in the Bishopgate jewel case It s true you set us on the right track but you ll own now that it was more by good luck than good guidance

It was a piece of very simple reasoning

Oh come now come! Never be ashamed to own up But what is all this? Bad business! Bad business! Stern facts here – no room for theories How lucky that I happened to be out at Norwood over another case! I was at the station when the message arrived What d you think the man died of?

Oh, this is hardly a case for me to theorize over said Holmes dryly

No no Still we can t deny that you hit the nail on the head sometimes Dear me! Door locked I understand Jewels worth half a million missing How was the window?

Fastened but there are steps on the sill

'Well well if it was fastened the steps could have nothing to do with the matter That s common sense Man might have died in a fit, but then the jewels are missing Ha! I have a theory These flashes come upon me at times —Just step outside Sergeant and you Mr Sholto Your friend can remain — What do you think of this Holmes? Sholto was on his own confession with his brother last night The brother died in a fit on which Sholto walked off with the treasure? How s that?

On which the dead man very considerately got up and locked the door on the inside

Hum! There s a flaw there Let us apply common sense to the matter This Thaddeus Sholto *was* with his brother there *was* a quarrel so much we know The brother is dead and the jewels are gone So much also we know No one saw the brother from the time Thaddeus left him His bed had not been slept in Thaddeus is evidently in a most disturbed state of mind His appearance is — well not attractive You see that I am weaving my web round Thaddeus The net begins to close upon him

'You are not quite in possession of the facts yet said Holmes 'This splinter of wood which I have every reason to believe to be poisoned was in the man s scalp where you still see the mark this card insc ibed as you see it was on the table and beside it lay this rather curious stone headed instrument How does all that fit into your theory?

Confirms it in every respect, said the fat detective pompously House is full of Indian curiosities Thaddeus

brought this up and if this splinter be poisonous Thaddeus may as well have made murderous use of it as any other man The card is some hocus pocus – a blind as like as not The only question is how did he depart? Ah, of course here is a hole in the roof

With great activity considering his bulk he sprang up the steps and squeezed through into the garret and immediately afterwards we heard his exulting voice proclaiming that he had found the trapdoor

He can find something remarked Holmes shrugging his shoulders he has occasional glimmerings of reason *Il n y a pas des sots si incommodes que ceux qui ont de l esprit?*

'You see' said Athelney Jones reappearing down the steps again facts are better than theories after all My view of the case is confirmed There is a trapdoor communicating with the roof, and it is partly open

It was I who opened it

Oh indeed! You did notice it then? He seemed a little crestfallen at the discovery Well whoever noticed it it shows how our gentleman got away Inspector!

'Yes sir from the passage

Ask Mr Sholto to step this way – Mr Sholto it is my duty to inform you that anything which you may say will be used against you I arrest you in the Queen s name as being concerned in the death of your brother

'There now! Didn t I tell you! cried the poor little man, throwing out his hands and looking from one to the other of us

Don t trouble yourself about it Mr Sholto said Holmes I think that I can engage to clear you of the charge

Don t promise too much Mr Theorist don t promise too much! snapped the detective You may find it a harder matter than you think

Not only will I clear him Mr Jones but I will make you a free present of the name and description of one of the two people who were in this room last night His

name I have every reason to believe is Jonathan Small He is a poorly educated man, small, active, with his right leg off and wearing a wooden stump which is worn away upon the inner side His left boot has a coarse square-toed sole, with an iron band round the heel He is a middle-aged man much sunburned, and has been a convict These few indications may be of some assistance to you coupled with the fact that there is a good deal of skin missing from the palm of his hand The other man –

Ah! the other man? asked Athelney Jones in a sneering voice, but impressed none the less as I could easily see by the precision of the other s manner

Is a rather curious person said Sherlock Holmes turning upon his heel I hope before very long to be able to introduce you to the pair of them A word with you Watson

He led me out to the head of the stair

This unexpected occurrence he said has caused us rather to lose sight of the original purpose of our journey

I have just been thinking so I answered it is not right that Miss Morstan should remain in this stricken house

No You must escort her home She lives with Mrs Cecil Forrester in Lower Camberwell so it is not very far I will wait for you here if you will drive out again Or perhaps you are too tired?

By no means I don t think I could rest until I know more of this fantastic business I have seen something of the rough side of life but I give you my word that this quick succession of strange surprises to-night has shaken my nerve completely I should like however to see the matter through with you now that I have got so far

Your presence will be of great service to me he answered We shall work the case out independently and leave this fellow Jones to exult over any mare s nest

which he may choose to construct When you have dropped Miss Morstan, I wish you to go on to No 3 Pinchin Lane down near the water s edge at Lambeth The third house on the right hand side is a bird stuffer s Sherman is the name You will see a weasel holding a young rabbit in the window Knock old Sherman up and tell him with my compliments that I want Toby at once You will bring Toby back in the cab with you

A dog I suppose

Yes a queer mongrel with a most amazing power of scent I would rather have Toby s help than that of the whole detective force of London

I shall bring him then said I It is one now I ought to be back before three if I can get a fresh horse

And I said Holmes shall see what I can learn from Mrs Bernstone and from the Indian servant who Mr Thaddeus tells me sleeps in the next garret Then I shall study the great Jones s methods and listen to his not too delicate sarcasms

Wir sind gewohnt dass die Menschen werhohnen was sie nicht verstehen

Goethe is always pithy

7

The Episode of the Barrel

The police had brought a cab with them and in this I escorted Miss Morstan back to her home After the angelic fashion of women she had borne trouble with a calm face as long as there was someone weaker than herself to support and I had found her bright and placid by the side of the frightened housekeeper In the cab, however she first turned faint and then burst into a passion of weeping – so sorely had she been tried by the adventures of the night She has told me since that she thought me cold and distant upon that journey She little guessed the struggle within my breast or the effort of self restraint which held me back My sympathies and my love went out to her even as my hand had in the garden I felt that years of the conventionalities of life could not teach me to know her sweet brave nature as had this one day of strange experiences Yet there were two thoughts which sealed the words of affection upon my lips She was weak and helpless shaken in mind and nerve It was to take her at a disadvantage to obtrude love upon her at such a time Worse still she was rich If Holmes s researches were successful she would be an heiress Was it fair was it honourable that a half pay surgeon should take such advantage of an intimacy which chance had brought about? Might she not look upon me as a mere vulgar fortune seeker? I could not bear to risk that such a thought should cross her mind This Agra treasure intervened like an impassable barrier between us

It was nearly two o clock when we reached Mrs Cecil Forrester s The servants had retired hours ago but Mrs Forrester had been so interested by the strange message

which Miss Morstan had received that she had sat up in the hope of her return She opened the door herself a middle-aged graceful woman and it gave me joy to see how tenderly her arm stole round the other s waist and how motherly was the voice in which she greeted her She was clearly no mere paid dependant but an honoured friend I was introduced and Mrs Forrester earnestly begged me to step in and tell her our adventures I explained however the importance of my errand and promised faithfully to call and report any progress which we might make with the case As we drove away I stole a glance back and I still seem to see that little group on the step – the two graceful clinging figures the half opened door the hall light shining through stained glass the barometer and the bright stair rods It was soothing to catch even that passing glimpse of a tranquil English home in the midst of the wild dark business which had absorbed us

And the more I thought of what had happened the wilder and darker it grew I reviewed the whole extra ordinary sequence of events as I rattled on through the silent gas lit streets There was the original problem that at least was pretty clear now The death of Captain Morstan the sending of the pearls the advertisement the letter – we had had light upon all those events They had only led us however to a deeper and far more tragic mystery The Indian treasure the curious plan found among Morstan s baggage the strange scene at Major Sholto s death the rediscovery of the treasure immediately followed by the murder of the discoverer the very singular accompaniments to the crime the footsteps the remarkable weapons the words upon the card corresponding with those upon Captain Morstan s chart – here was indeed a labyrinth in which a man less singularly endowed than my fellow lodger might well despair of ever finding the clue

Pinchin Lane was a row of shabby, two storeyed brick houses in the lower quarter of Lambeth I had to knock for some time at No 3 before I could make any impression At last however there was the glint of a candle behind the blind and a face looked out at the upper window

Go on, you drunken vagabond, said the face If you kick up any more row, I ll open the kennels and let out forty three dogs upon you

If you ll let one out it s just what I have come for, said I

Go on! yelled the voice So help me gracious, I have a wiper in this bag, and I ll drop it on your ead if you don t hook it!

But I want a dog, I cried

I won t be argued with! shouted Mr Sherman Now stand clear, for when I say three , down goes the wiper

Mr Sherlock Holmes – I began but the words had a most magical effect, for the window instantly slammed down and within a minute the door was unbarred and open Mr Sherman was a lanky, lean old man, with stooping shoulders a stringy neck and blue tinted glasses

A friend of Mr Sherlock is always welcome, said he Step in sir Keep clear of the badger for he bites Ah, naughty naughty would you take a nip at the gentleman? This to a stoat which thrust its wicked head and red eyes between the bars of its cage Don t mind that sir it s only a slow worm It hain t got no fangs so I gives it the run o the room for it keeps the beetles down You must not mind my bein just a little short wi you at first for I m guyed at by the children and there s many a one just comes down this lane to knock me up What was it that Mr Sherlock Holmes wanted sir?

He wanted a dog of yours

Ah! that would be Toby

'Yes Toby was the name

'Toby lives at No 7 on the left here

He moved slowly forward with his candle among the queer animal family which he had gathered round him In the uncertain shadowy light I could see dimly that there were glancing glimmering eyes peeping down at us from every cranny and corner Even the rafters above our heads were lined by solemn fowls, who lazily shifted their weight from one leg to the other as our voices disturbed their slumbers

Toby proved to be an ugly long haired lop eared creature half spaniel and half lurcher brown and white in colour with a very clumsy waddling gait It accepted after some hesitation a lump of sugar which the old naturalist handed to me and having thus sealed an alliance it followed me to the cab and made no difficulties about accompanying me It had just struck three on the Palace clock when I found myself back once more at Pondicherry Lodge The ex prize fighter McMurdo had I found been arrested as an accessory and both he and Mr Sholto had been marched off to the station Two constables guarded the narrow gate but they allowed me to pass with the dog on my mentioning the detective s name

Holmes was standing on the doorstep with his hands in his pockets smoking his pipe

Ah you have him there' said he Good dog then' Athelney Jones has gone We have had an immense display of energy since you left He has arrested not only friend Thaddeus but the gatekeeper the housekeeper and the Indian servant We have the place to ourselves but for a sergeant upstairs Leave the dog here and come up

We tied Toby to the hall table and reascended the stairs The room was as we had left it save that a sheet had been draped over the central figure A weary looking police sergeant reclined in the corner

Lend me your bull s eye Sergeant, said my companion Now tie this bit of card round my neck so as to hang it in front of me Thank you Now I must kick off my boots and stockings Just you carry them down with you Watson I am going to do a little climbing And dip my handkerchief into the creosote That will do Now *come up into the garret with me for a moment*

We clambered up through the hole Holmes turned his light once more upon the footsteps in the dust

I wish you particularly to notice these foot-marks he said Do you observe anything noteworthy about them?

They belong I said to a child or a small woman

Apart from their size though Is there nothing else?

They appear to be much as other foot marks

Not at all Look here! This is the print of a right foot in the dust Now I make one with my naked foot beside it What is the chief difference?

Your toes are all cramped together The other print has each toe distinctly divided

Quite so That is the point Bear that in mind Now, would you kindly step over to that flap window and smell the edge of the woodwork? I shall stay over here, as I have this handkerchief in my hand

I did as he directed and was instantly conscious of a strong tarry smell

That is where he put his foot in getting out If *you* can trace him I should think that Toby will have no difficulty Now run downstairs, loose the dog and look out for Blondin

By the time that I got out into the grounds Sherlock Holmes was on the roof and I could see him like an enormous glow worm crawling very slowly along the ridge I lost sight of him behind a stack of chimneys but he presently reappeared and then vanished once more upon the opposite side When I made my way round there I *found him seated* at one of the corner eaves

That you, Watson? he cried

Yes

This is the place What is that black thing down there?

A water barrel

Top on it?

Yes

No sign of a ladder?

No

Confound the fellow! It s a most breakneck place I ought to be able to come down where he could climb up The water pipe feels pretty firm Here goes anyhow

There was a scuffling of feet and the lantern began to come steadily down the side of the wall Then with a light spring he came on to the barrel and from there to the earth

It was easy to follow him he said drawing on his stockings and boots Tiles were loosened the whole way along and in his hurry he had dropped this It confirms my diagnosis as you doctors express it

The object which he held up to me was a small pocket or pouch woven out of coloured grasses and with a few tawdry beads strung round it In shape and size it was not unlike a cigarette case Inside were half a dozen spines of dark wood sharp at one end and rounded at the other like that which had struck Bartholomew Sholto

They are hellish things said he Look out that you don t prick yourself I m delighted to have them for the chances are that they are all he has There is the less fear of you or me finding one in our skin before long I would sooner face a Martini bullet myself Are you game for a six mile trudge Watson?

Certainly I answered

Your leg will stand it?

Oh yes

Here you are doggy! Good old Toby! Smell it Toby smell it! He pushed the creosote handkerchief under the dog s nose while the creature stood with its fluffy legs

separated and with a most comical cock to its head like a connoisseur sniffing the bouquet of a famous vintage Holmes then threw the handkerchief to a distance fastened a stout cord to the mongrel s collar and led him to the foot of the water barrel The creature instantly broke into a succession of high tremulous yelps and with his nose on the ground and his tail in the air pattered off upon the trail at a pace which strained his leash and kept us at the top of our speed

The east had been gradually whitening and we could now see some distance in the cold grey light The square massive house with its black empty windows and high, bare walls towered up sad and forlorn, behind us Our course led right across the grounds in and out among the trenches and pits with which they were scarred and intersected The whole place with its scattered dirt heaps and ill grown shrubs, had a blighted ill omened look which harmonized with the black tragedy which hung over it

On reaching the boundary wall Toby ran along, whining eagerly underneath its shadow and stopped finally in a corner screened by a young beech Where the two walls joined, several bricks had been loosened, and the crevices left were worn down and rounded upon the lower side as though they had frequently been used as a ladder Holmes clambered up and taking the dog from me he dropped it over upon the other side

'There s the print of Wooden leg s hand he re marked as I mounted up beside him You see the slight smudge of blood upon the white plaster What a lucky thing it is that we have had *no* very heavy rain since yesterday! The scent will lie upon the road in spite of their eight and twenty hours start

I confess that I had my doubts myself when I reflected upon the great traffic which had passed along the London road in the interval My fears were soon appeased however Toby never hesitated or swerved but

waddled on in his peculiar rolling fashion Clearly the pungent smell of the creosote rose high above all other contending scents

Do not imagine said *Holmes* that *I depend for my* success in this case upon the mere chance of one of these fellows having put his foot in the chemical I have knowledge now which would enable me to trace them in many different ways This however is the readiest and since fortune has put it into our hands I should be culpable if I neglected it It has however prevented the case from becoming the pretty little intellectual problem which it at one time promised to be There might have been some credit to be gained out of it but for this too palpable clue

There is credit and to spare said I I assure you Holmes that I marvel at the means by which you obtain your results in this case even more than I did in the Jefferson Hope murder The thing seems to me to be deeper and more inexplicable How for example could you describe with such confidence the wooden legged man?

Pshaw my dear boy! it was simplicity itself I don t wish to be theatrical It is all patent and above board Two officers who are in command of a convict guard learn an important secret as to buried treasure A map is drawn for them by an Englishman named Jonathan Small You remember that we saw the name upon the chart in Captain Morstan s possession He had signed it on behalf of himself and his associates – the sign of the four as he somewhat dramatically called it Aided by this chart the officers – or one of them – gets the treasure and brings it to England leaving we will suppose some condition under which he received it unfulfilled Now then why did not Jonathan Small get the treasure himself? The answer is obvious The chart is dated at a time when Morstan was brought into close association with convicts Jonathan Small did not get

the treasure because he and his associates were them selves convicts and could not get away

But this is mere speculation said I

It is more than that It is the only hypothesis which covers the facts Let us see how it fits in with the sequel Major Sholto remains at peace for some years happy in the possession of his treasure Then he receives a letter from India which gives him a great fright What was that?

A letter to say that the men whom he had wronged had been set free

Or had escaped That is much more likely for he would have known what their term of imprisonment was It would not have been a surprise to him What does he do then? He guards himself against a wooden legged man – a white man mark you for he mistakes a white tradesman for him and actually fires a pistol at him Now only one white man s name is on the chart The others are Hindoos or Mohammedans There is no other white man Therefore we may say with confidence that the wooden legged man is identical with Jonathan Small Does the reasoning strike you as being faulty?

No it is clear and concise

Well now let us put ourselves in the place of Jonathan Small Let us look at it from his point of view He comes to England with the double idea of regaining what he would consider to be his rights and of having his revenge upon the man who had wronged him He found out where Sholto lived and very possibly he established communications with someone inside the house There is this butler Lal Rao whom we have not seen Mrs Bernstone gives him far from a good character Small could not find out however where the treasure was hid, for no one ever knew save the major and one faithful servant who had died Suddenly Small learns that the major is on his deathbed In a frenzy lest the secret of the treasure die with him he runs the gauntlet of the

guards makes his way to the dying man s window and is only deterred from entering by the presence of his two sons Mad with hate however against the dead man he enters the room that night searches his private papers in the hope of discovering some memorandum relating to the treasure and finally leaves a memento of his visit in the short inscription upon the card He had doubtless planned beforehand that should he slay the major he would leave some such record upon the body as a sign that it was not a common murder but from the point of view of the four associates something in the nature of an act of justice Whimsical and bizarre conceits of this kind are common enough in the annals of crime and usually afford valuable indications as to the criminal Do you follow all this?

Very clearly

Now what could Jonathan Small do? He could only continue to keep a secret watch upon the efforts made to find the treasure Possibly he leaves England and only comes back at intervals Then comes the discovery of the garret and he is instantly informed of it We again trace the presence of some confederate in the househo'd Jonathan with his wooden leg is utterly unable to reach the lofty room of Bartholomew Sholto He takes with him however a rather curious associate who gets over this difficulty but dips his naked foot into creosote whence come Toby and a six mile limp for a half pay officer with a damaged tendo Achillis

But it was the associate and not Jonathan who committed the crime

Quite so And rather to Jonathan s disgust to judge by the way he stamped about when he got into the room He bore no grudge against Bartholomew Sholto and would have preferred if he could have been simply bound and gagged He did not wish to put his head in a halter There was no help for it however the savage instincts of his companion had broken out and the

poison had done its work so Jonathan Small left his record lowered the treasure box to the ground, and followed it himself That was the train of events as far as I can decipher them Of course as to his personal appearance he must be middle aged and must be sun burned after serving his time in such an oven as the Andamans His height is readily calculated from the length of his stride and we know that he was bearded His hairiness was the one point which impressed itself upon Thaddeus Sholto when he saw him at the window I don t know that there is anything else

The associate?

Ah well, there is no great mystery in that But you will know all about it soon enough How sweet the morning air is! See how that one little cloud floats like a pink feather from some gigantic flamingo Now the red rim of the sun pushes itself over the London cloud bank It shines on a good many folk but on none I dare bet who are on a stranger errand than you and I How small we feel with our petty ambitions and strivings in the presence of the great elemental forces of Nature! Are you well up in your Jean Paul?

Fairly so I worked back to him through Carlyle

That was like following the brook to the parent lake He makes one curious but profound remark It is that the chief proof of man s real greatness lies in his perception of his own smallness It argues you see a power of comparison and of appreciation which is in itself a proof of nobility There is much food for thought in Richter You have not a pistol have you?

I have my stick

It is just possible that we may need something of the sort if we get to their lair Jonathan I shall leave to you but if the other turns nasty I shall shoot him dead

He took out his revolver as he spoke and having loaded two of the chambers he put it back into the right hand pocket of his jacket

We had during this time been following the guidance of Toby down the half rural villa lined roads which lead to the metropolis Now however we were beginning to come among continuous streets where labourers and dockmen were already astir and slatternly women were taking down shutters and brushing doorsteps At the square topped corner public houses business was just beginning and rough looking men were emerging rubbing their sleeves across their beards after their mo ning wet Strange dogs sauntered up and stared wonderingly at us as we passed but our inimitable Toby looked neither to the right nor to the left but trotted onward with his nose to the ground and an occasional eager whine which spoke of a hot scent

We had traversed Streatham Brixton Camberwell and now found ourselves in Kennington Lane having borne away through the side streets to the east of the Oval The men whom we pursued seemed to have taken a curiously zigzag road with the idea probably of escaping observation They had never kept to the main road if a parallel side street would serve their turn At the foot of Kennington Lane they had edged away to the left through Bond Street and Miles Street Where the latter street turns into Knight s Place Toby ceased to advance but began to run backward and forward with one ear cocked and the other drooping the very picture of canine indecision Then he waddled round in circles looking up to us from time to time as if to ask for sympathy in his embarrassment

What the deuce is the matter with the dog? growled Holmes They surely would not take a cab or go off in a balloon

Perhaps they stood here for some time I suggested

Ah! it s all right He s off again said my companion in a tone of relief

He was indeed off for after sniffing round again he suddenly made up his mind and darted away with an

energy and determination such as he had not yet shown The scent appeared to be much hotter than before for he had not even to put his nose on the ground but tugged at his leash and tried to break into a run I could see by the gleam in Holmes s eyes that he thought we were nearing the end of our journey

Our course now ran down Nine Elms until we came to Broderick and Nelson s large timber yard just past the White Eagle tavern Here the dog frantic with excitement, turned down through the side gate into the enclosure where the sawyers were already at work On the dog raced through sawdust and shavings, down an alley round a passage between two wood piles and finally, with a triumphant yelp sprang upon a large barrel which still stood upon the hand trolley on which it had been brought With lolling tongue and blinking eyes Toby stood upon the cask looking from one to the other of us for some sign of appreciation The staves of the barrel and the wheels of the trolley were smeared with a dark liquid and the whole air was heavy with the smell of creosote

Sherlock Holmes and I looked blankly at each other and then burst simultaneously into an uncontrollable fit of laughter

What now? I asked Toby has lost his character for infallibility

He acted according to his lights, said Holmes lifting him down from the barrel and walking him out of the timber-yard If you consider how much creosote is carted about London in one day it is no great wonder that our trail should have been crossed It is much used now especially for the seasoning of wood Poor Toby is not to blame

'We must get on the main scent again I suppose

Yes And fortunately we have no distance to go Evidently what puzzled the dog at the corner of Knight s Place was that there were two different trails running in opposite directions We took the wrong one It only remains to follow the other

There was no difficulty about this On leading Toby to the place where he had committed his fault, he cast about in a wide circle and finally dashed off in a fresh direction

We must take care that he does not now bring us to the place where the creosote barrel came from I observed

I had thought of that But you notice that he keeps on the pavement whereas the barrel passed down the roadway No we are on the true scent now

It tended down towards the riverside running through Belmont Place and Prince s Street At the end of Broad Street it ran right down to the water s edge — here there was a small wooden wharf Toby led us to the very edge of this and there stood whining looking out on the dark current beyond

'We are out of luck said Holmes They have taken to a boat here

Several small punts and skiffs were lying about in the water and on the edge of the wharf We took Toby round to each in turn but though he sniffed earnestly he made no sign

Close to the rude landing stage was a small brick house with a wooden placard slung out through the second window Mordecai Smith was printed across it in large letters, and underneath Boats to hire by the hour or day A second inscription above the door informed us that a steam launch was kept – a statement which was confirmed by a great pile of coke upon the jetty Sherlock Holmes looked slowly round and his face assumed an ominous expression

'This looks bad said he These fellows are sharper than I expected They seem to have covered their tracks There has, I fear been preconcerted management here

He was approaching the door of the house, when it opened, and a little curly headed lad of six came running out followed by a stoutish red faced woman with a large sponge in her hand

'You come back and be washed Jack she shouted Come back you young imp for if your father comes home and finds you like that he ll let us hear of it

'Dear little chap! said Holmes strategically What a rosy-cheeked young rascal! Now Jack is there anything you would like?

The youth pondered for a moment

I d like a shillin said he

Nothing you would like better?

I d like two shillin better, the prodigy answered after some thought

Here you are then! Catch! – A fine child Mrs Smith!

'Lor bless you sir he is that and forward He gets

a most too much for me to manage specially when my man is away days at a time

Away is he? said Holmes in a disappointed voice I am sorry for that for I wanted to speak to Mr Smith

He s been away since yesterday mornin sir and truth to tell I am beginnin to feel frightened about him But if it was about a boat sir maybe I could serve as well

I wanted to hire his steam launch

Why, bless you sir it is in the steam launch that he has gone That s what puzzles me for I know there ain t more coals in her than would take her to about Woolwich and back If he s been away in the barge I d ha thought nothin for many a time a job has taken him as far as Gravesend and then if there was much doin there he might ha stayed over But what good is a steam launch without coals?

He might have bought some at a wharf down the river

He might sir but it weren t his way Many a time I ve heard him call out at the prices they charge for a few odd bags Besides I don t like that wooden legged man wi his ugly face and outlandish talk What did he want always knockin about here for?

A wooden legged man? said Holmes with bland surprise

Yes sir a brown monkey faced chap that s called more n once for my old man It was him that roused him up yesternight and what s more my man knew he was comin for he had steam up in the launch I tell you straight sir I don t feel easy in my mind about it

But my dear Mrs Smith said Holmes shrugging his shoulders you are frightening yourself about nothing How could you possibly tell that it was the wooden legged man who came in the night? I don t quite understand how you can be so sure

His voice sir I knew his voice which is kind o

thick and foggy He tapped at the winder – about three it would be Show a leg matey says he time to turn out guard My old man woke up Jim – that s my eldest – and away they went without so much as a word to me I could hear the wooden leg clackin on the stones

And was this wooden legged man alone?

Couldn t say, I am sure sir I didn t hear no one else

I am sorry, Mrs Smith, for I wanted a steam launch and I have heard good reports of the – Let me see what is her name?

The *Aurora* sir

Ah! she s not that old green launch with a yellow line, very broad in the beam?

No indeed She s as trim a little thing as any on the river She s been fresh painted black with two red streaks

Thanks – I hope that you will hear soon from Mr Smith I am going down the river, and if I should see anything of the *Aurora* I shall let him know that you are uneasy A black funnel, you say?

No, sir Black with a white band

Ah of course It was the sides which were black Good morning Mrs Smith There is a boatman here with a wherry Watson We shall take it and cross the river

The main thing with people of that sort, said Holmes as we sat in the sheets of the wherry is never to let them think that their information can be of the slightest importance to you If you do they will instantly shut up like an oyster If you listen to them under protest as it were you are very likely to get what you want

Our course now seems pretty clear, said I

What would you do then?

I would engage a launch and go down the river on the track of the *Aurora*

My dear fellow it would be a colossal task She may have touched at any wharf on either side of the stream between here and Greenwich Below the bridge there is a perfect labyrinth of landing places for miles It would take you days and days to exhaust them if you set about it alone

Employ the police then

No I shall probably call Athelney Jones in at the last moment He is not a bad fellow and I should not like to do anything which would injure him professionally But I have a fancy for working it out myself now that we have gone so far

Could we advertise then asking for information from wharfingers?

Worse and worse! Our men would know that the chase was hot at their heels and they would be off out of the country As it is they are likely enough to leave but as long as they think they are perfectly safe they will be in no hurry Jones s energy will be of use to us there, for his view of the case is sure to push itself into the daily press and the runaways will think that everyone is off on the wrong scent

What are we to do then? I asked as we landed near *Millbank Penitentiary*

Take this hansom drive home have some breakfast and get an hour s sleep It is quite on the cards that we may be afoot to night again Stop at a telegraph office cabby! We will keep Toby for he may be of use to us yet

We pulled up at the Great Peter Street Post Office and Holmes dispatched his wire

Whom do you think that is to? he asked as we resumed our journey

I am sure I don t know

You remember the Baker Street division of the detective police force whom I employed in the Jefferson Hope case?

Well said I, laughing

This is just the case where they might be invaluable If they fail I have other resources but I shall try them first That wire was to my dirty little lieutenant Wiggins, and I expect that he and his gang will be with us before we have finished our breakfast

It was between eight and nine o clock now and I was conscious of a strong reaction after the successive excitements of the night I was limp and weary befogged in mind and fatigued in body I had not the professional enthusiasm which carried my companion on nor could I look at the matter as a mere abstract intellectual problem As far as the death of Bartholomew Sholto went I had heard little good of him and could feel no intense antipathy to his murderers The treasure however, was a different matter That or part of it, belonged rightfully to Miss Morstan While there was a chance of recovering it I was ready to devote my life to the one object True if I found it it would probably put her forever beyond my reach Yet it would be a petty and selfish love which would be influenced by such a thought as that If Holmes could work to find the criminals, I had a tenfold stronger reason to urge me on to find the treasure

A bath at Baker Street and a complete change freshened me up wonderfully When I came down to our room I found the breakfast laid and Holmes pouring out the coffee

Here it is said he laughing and pointing to an open newspaper The energetic Jones and the ubiquitous reporter have fixed it up between them But you have had enough of the case Better have your ham and eggs first

I took the paper from him and read the short notice which was headed Mysterious Business at Upper Norwood

About twelve o clock last night [said the *Standard*] Mr Bartholomew Sholto of Pondicherry Lodge Upper Norwood was found dead in his room under circumstances which point to foul play As far as we can learn no actual traces of violence were found upon Mr Sholto s person but a valuable collection of Indian gems which the deceased gentleman had inherited from his father had been carried off The discovery was first made by Mr Sherlock Holmes and Dr Watson who had called at the house with Mr Thaddeus Sholto brother of the deceased By a singular piece of good fortune Mr Athelney Jones the well known member of the detective police force happened to be at the Norwood police station and was on the ground within half an hour of the first alarm His trained and experienced faculties were at once directed towards the detection of the criminals with the gratifying result that the brother Thaddeus Sholto has already been arrested together with the housekeeper Mrs Bernstone and Indian butler named Lal Rao and a porter or gatekeeper named McMurdo It is quite certain that the thief or thieves were well acquainted with the house for Mr Jones s well known technical knowledge and his powers of minute observation have enabled him to prove conclusively that the miscreants could not have entered by the door or by the window but must have made their way across the roof of the building and so through a trapdoor into a room which communicated with that in which the body was found This fact which has been very clearly made out proves conclusively that it was no mere haphazard burglary The prompt and energetic action of the officers of the law shows the great advantage of the presence on such occasions of a single vigorous and masterful mind We cannot but think that it supplies an argument to those who would wish to see our detectives more de-centralized and so brought into closer and more effective touch with the cases which it is their duty to investigate

Isn t it gorgeous' said Holmes, grinning over his coffee cup What do you think of it?

I think that we have had a close shave ourselves of being arrested for the crime

So do I I wouldn t answer for our safety now if he

should happen to have another of his attacks of energy

At this moment there was a loud ring at the bell, and I could hear Mrs Hudson our landlady raising her voice in a wail of expostulation and dismay

By heavens Holmes I said, half rising I believe that they are really after us

No it s not quite so bad as that It is the unofficial force – the Baker Street irregulars

As he spoke there came a swift pattering of naked feet upon the stairs a clatter of high voices and in rushed a dozen dirty and ragged little street Arabs There was some show of discipline among them despite their tumultuous entry for they instantly drew up in line and stood facing us with expectant faces One of their number taller and older than the others stood forward with an air of lounging superiority which was very funny in such a disreputable little scarecrow

Got your message sir said he and brought em on sharp Three bob and a tanner for tickets

Here you are said Holmes producing some silver In future they can report to you Wiggins and you to me I cannot have the house invaded in this way However it is just as well that you should all hear the instructions I want to find the whereabouts of a steam launch called the *Aurora* owner Mordecai Smith black with two red streaks funnel black with a white band She is down the river somewhere I want one boy to be at Mordecai Smith s landing stage opposite Millbank to say if the boat comes back You must divide it out among yourselves and do both banks thoroughly Let me know the moment you have news Is that all clear?

Yes guv nor said Wiggins

The old scale of pay and a guinea to the boy who finds the boat Here s a day in advance Now off you go!

He handed them a shilling each and away they buzzed down the stairs and I saw them a moment later streaming down the street

If the launch is above water they will find her said Holmes as he rose from the table and lit his pipe They can go everywhere, see everything overhear everyone I expect to hear before evening that they have spotted her In the meanwhile we can do nothing but await results We cannot pick up the broken trail until we find either the *Aurora* or Mr Mordecai Smith

Toby could eat these scraps I dare say Are you going to bed Holmes?

No I am not tired I have a curious constitution I never remember feeling tired by work though idleness exhausts me completely I am going to smoke and to think over this queer business to which my fair client has introduced us If ever man had an easy task, this of ours ought to be Wooden legged mer are not so common but the other man must I should think be absolutely unique

That other man again!

I have no wish to make a mystery of him to you anyway But you must have formed your own opinion Now do consider the data Diminutive footmarks toes never fettered by boots, naked feet stone headed wooden mace great agility small poisoned darts What do you make of all this?

A savage! I exclaimed Perhaps one of those Indians who were the associates of Jonathan Small

Hardly that, said he When first I saw signs of strange weapons I was inclined to think so, but the remarkable character of the foot marks caused me to recon sider my views Some of the inhabitants of the Indian Peninsula are small men but none could have left such marks as that The Hindoo proper has long and thin feet The sandal wearing Mohammedan has the great toe well separated from the others because the thong is commonly passed between These little darts too could only be shot in one way They are from a blow pipe Now then where are we to find our savage?

South America, I hazarded

He stretched his hand up and took down a bulky volume from the shelf

This is the first volume of a gazetteer which is now being published It may be looked upon as the very latest authority What have we here?

Andaman Islands situated 340 miles to the north of Sumatra in the Bay of Bengal

Hum! hum! What s all this? Moist climate coral reefs sharks Port Blair convict barracks Rutland Island cottonwoods – Ah here we are!

The aborigines of the Andaman Islands may perhaps claim the distinction of being the smallest race upon this earth though some anthropologists prefer the Bushmen of Africa the Digger Indians of America and the Terra del Fuegians The average height is rather below four feet although many full grown adults may be found who are very much smaller than this They are a fierce morose and intractable people though capable of forming most devoted friendships when their confidence has once been gained

Mark that Watson Now then listen to this

They are naturally hideous having large misshapen heads small fierce eyes and distorted features Their feet and hands however are remarkably small So intractable and fierce are they that all the efforts of the British officials have failed to win them over in any degree They have always been a terror to shipwrecked crews braining the survivors with their stone-headed clubs or shooting them with their poisoned arrows These massacres are invariably concluded by a cannibal feast

Nice amiable people Watson! If this fellow had been left to his own unaided devices this affair might have taken an even more ghastly turn I fancy that even as it is Jonathan Small would give a good deal not to have employed him

But how came he to have so singular a companion?

Ah that is more than I can tell Since however we

had already determined that Small had come from the Andamans it is not so very wonderful that this islander should be with him No doubt we shall know all about it in time Look here Watson you look regularly done Lie down there on the sofa and see if I can put you to sleep

He took up his violin from ti • corner and as I stretched myself out he began to play some low dreamy melodious air – his own no doubt for he had a remarkable gift for improvisation I have a vague remembrance of his gaunt limbs, his earnest face and the rise and fall of his bow Then I seemed to be floated peacefully away upon a soft sea of sound until I found myself in dream land with the sweet face of Mary Morstan looking down upon me

9

A Break in the Chain

It was late in the afternoon before I woke strengthened and refreshed Sherlock Holmes still sat exactly as I had left him, save that he had laid aside his violin and was deep in a book He looked across at me as I stirred and I noticed that his face was dark and troubled

'You have slept soundly he said I feared that our talk would wake you

I heard nothing I answered Have you had fresh news, then?

Unfortunately, no I confess that I am surprised and disappointed I expected something definite by this time Wiggins has just been up to report He says that no trace can be found of the launch It is a provoking check for every hour is of importance

Can I do anything? I am perfectly fresh now and quite ready for another night s outing

'No we can do nothing We can only wait If we go ourselves the message might come in our absence and delay be caused You can do what you will but I must remain on guard

Then I shall run over to Camberwell and call upon Mrs Cecil Forrester She asked me to yesterday

On Mrs Cecil Forrester? asked Holmes with the twinkle of a smile in his eyes

Well of course on Miss Morstan too They were anxious to hear what happened

I would not tell them too much said Holmes Women are never to be entirely trusted – not the best of them

I did not pause to argue over this atrocious sentiment

I shall be back in an hour or two, I remarked

All right' Good luck' But I say, if you are crossing the river you may as well return Toby for I don t think it is at all likely that we shall have any use for him now

I took our mongrel accordingly and left him together with a half sovereign at the old naturalist s in Pinchin Lane At Camberwell I found Miss Morstan a little weary after her night s adventures but very eager to hear the news Mrs Forrester too was full of curiosity I told them all that we had done suppressing however the more dreadful parts of the tragedy Thus although I spoke of Mr Sholto s death I said nothing of the exact manner and method of it With all my omissions however there was enough to startle and amaze them

It is a romance' cried Mrs Forrester An injured lady half a million in treasure a black cannibal and a wooden legged ruffian They take the place of the conventional dragon or wicked earl

And two knight errants to the rescue added Miss Morstan with a bright glance at me

Why Mary your fortune depends upon the issue of this search I don t think that you are nearly excited enough Just imagine what it must be to be so rich and to have the world at your feet'

It sent a little thrill of joy to my heart to notice that she showed no sign of elation at the prospect On the contrary she gave a toss of her proud head as though the matter were one in which she took small interest

It is for Mr Thaddeus Sholto that I am anxious she said Nothing else is of any consequence but I think that he has behaved most kindly and honourably throughout It is our duty to clear him of this dreadful and unfounded charge

It was evening before I left Camberwell and quite dark by the time I reached home My companion s book and pipe lay by his chair but he had disappeared I looked about in the hope of seeing a note but there was none

I suppose that Mr Sherlock Holmes has gone out I said to Mrs Hudson as she came up to lower the blinds

No, sir He has gone to his room sir Do you know, sir sinking her voice into an impressive whisper I am afraid for his health

Why so Mrs Hudson?

Well he s that strange sir After you was gone he walked and he walked up and down, and up and down until I was weary of the sound of his footstep Then I heard him talking to himself and muttering, and every time the bell rang out he came on the stairhead with What is that, Mrs Hudson? And now he has slammed off to his room but I can hear him walking away the same as ever I hope he s not going to be ill sir I ventured to say something to him about cooling medicine but he turned on me sir with such a look that I don t know how ever I got out of the room

I don t think that you have any cause to be uneasy, Mrs Hudson, I answered I have seen him like this before He has some small matter upon his mind which makes him restless

I tried to speak lightly to our worthy landlady but I was myself somewhat uneasy when through the long night I still from time to time heard the dull sound of his tread and knew how his keen spirit was chafing against this involuntary inaction

At breakfast time he looked worn and haggard with a little fleck of feverish colour upon either cheek

You are knocking yourself up old man I remarked I heard you marching about in the night

No I could not sleep he answered This infernal problem is consuming me It is too much to be balked by so petty an obstacle when all else had been over come I know the men the launch everything and yet I can get no news I have set other agencies at work and used every means at my disposal The whole river has been searched on either side but there is no news nor

has Mrs Smith heard of her husband I shall come to the conclusion soon that they have scuttled the craft But there are objections to that

Or that Mrs Smith has put us on a wrong scent

No I think that may be dismissed I had inquiries made and there is a launch of that description

Could it have gone up the river?

I have considered that possibility too and there is a search party who will work up as far as Richmond If no news comes to day I shall start off myself tomorrow and go for the men rather than the boat But surely surely we shall hear something

We did not however Not a word came to us either from Wiggins or from the other agencies There were articles in most of the papers upon the Norwood tragedy They all appeared to be rather hostile to the unfortunate Thaddeus Sholto No fresh details were to be found however in any of them save that an inquest was to be held upon the following day I walked over to Camberwell in the evening to report our ill success to the ladies and on my return I found Holmes dejected and somewhat morose He would hardly reply to my questions and busied himself all the evening in an abstruse chemical analysis which involved much heating of retorts and distilling of vapours ending at last in a smell which fairly drove me out of the apartment Up to the small hours of the morning I could hear the clinking of his test tubes which told me that he was still engaged in his malodorous experiment

In the early dawn I woke with a start and was surprised to find him standing by my bedside clad in a rude sailor dress with a pea jacket and a coarse red scarf round his neck

I am off down the river Watson said he I have been turning it over in my mind and I can see only one way out of it It is worth trying at all events

Surely I can come with you then? said I

No you can be much more useful if you will remain here as my representative I am loath to go for it is quite on the cards that some message may come during the day though Wiggins was despondent about it last night I want you to open all notes and telegrams and to act on your own judgment if any news should come Can I rely upon you?

Most certainly

I am afraid that you will not be able to wire me for I can hardly tell yet where I may find myself If I am in luck however I may not be gone so very long I shall have news of some sort or other before I get back

I had heard nothing of him by breakfast time On opening the *Standard* however I found that there was a fresh allusion to the business

With reference to the Upper Norwood tragedy [it remarked] we have reason to believe that the matter promises to be even more complex and mysterious than was originally supposed Fresh evidence has shown that it is quite impossible that Mr Thaddeus Sholto could have been in any way concerned in the matter He and the housekeeper Mrs Bernstone were both released yesterday evening It is believed however that the police have a clue as to the real culprits and that it is being prosecuted by Mr Athelney Jones of Scotland Yard with all his well known energy and sagacity Further arrests may be expected at any moment

That is satisfactory so far as it goes thought I Friend Sholto is safe at any rate I wonder what the fresh clue may be though it seems to be a stereotyped form whenever the police have made a blunder

I tossed the paper down upon the table but at that moment my eye caught an advertisement in the agony column It ran in this way

LOST – Whereas Mordecai Smith boatman and his son Jim left Smith s Wharf at or about three o clock last Tuesday morning in the steam launch *Aurora* black with two red stripes funnel black with a white band the sum of five pounds

will be paid to anyone who can give information to Mrs Smith at Smith s Wharf or at 221B Baker Street, as to the whereabouts of the said Mordecai Smith and the launch *Aurora*

This was clearly Holmes s doing The Baker Street address was enough to prove that It struck me as rather ingenious because it might be read by the fugitives without their seeing in it more than the natural anxiety of a wife for her missing husband

It was a long day Every time that a knock came to the door or a sharp step passed in the street I imagined that it was either Holmes returning or an answer to his advertisement I tried to read but my thoughts would wander off to our strange quest and to the ill assorted and villainous pair whom we were pursuing Could there be I wondered some radical flaw in my companion s reasoning? Might he not be suffering from some huge self-deception? Was it not possible that his nimble and speculative mind had built up this wild theory upon faulty premises? I had never known him to be wrong and yet the keenest reasoner may occasionally be deceived He was likely I thought to fall into error through the over refinement of his logic – his preference for a subtle and bizarre explanation when a plainer and more commonplace one lay ready to his hand Yet on the other hand I had myself seen the evidence and I had heard the reasons for his deductions When I looked back on the long chain of curious circumstances many of them trivial in themselves but all tending in the same direction I could not disguise from myself that even if Holmes s explanation were incorrect the true theory must be equally *outré* and startling

At three o clock on the afternoon there was a loud peal at the bell an authoritative voice in the hall and to my surprise no less a person than Mr Athelney Jones was shown up to me Very different was he however from the brusque and masterful professor of common sense

who had taken over the case so confidently at Upper Norwood His expression was downcast and his bearing meek and even apologetic

Good-day sir good day said he Mr Sherlock Holmes is out I understand

Yes and I cannot be sure when he will be back But perhaps you would care to wait Take that chair and try one of these cigars

Thank you I don t mind if I do said he mopping his face with a red bandanna handkerchief

And a whisky and soda?

Well, half a glass It is very hot for the time of year and I have had a good deal to worry and try me You know my theory about this Norwood case?

I remember that you expressed one

Well I have been obliged to reconsider it I had my net drawn tightly round Mr Sholto sir when pop he went through a hole in the middle of it He was able to prove an alibi which could not be shaken From the time that he left his brother s room he was never out of sight of someone or other So it could not be he who climbed over roofs and through trapdoors It s a very dark case and my professional credit is at stake I should be very glad of a little assistance

We all need help sometimes said I

Your friend Mr Sherlock Holmes is a wonderful man sir said he in a husky and confidential voice He s a man who is not to be beat I have known that young man go into a good many cases but I never saw the case yet that he could not throw a light upon He is irregular in his methods and a little quick perhaps in jumping at theories but on the whole I think he would have made a most promising officer and I don t care who knows it I have had a wire from him this morning by which I understand that he has got some clue to this Sholto business Here is his message

He took the telegram out of his pocket and handed it

to me It was dated from Poplar at twelve o clock

Go to Baker Street at once {it said} If I have not returned wait for me I am close on the track of the Sholto gang You can come with us to night if you want to be in at the finish

This sounds well He has evidently picked up the scent again said I

Ah then he has been at fault too exclaimed Jones with evident satisfaction Even the best of us are thrown off sometimes Of course this may prove to be a false alarm but it is my duty as an officer of the law to allow no chance to slip But there is someone at the door Perhaps this is he

A heavy step was heard ascending the stair with a great wheezing and rattling as from a man who was sorely put to it for breath Once or twice he stopped as though the climb were too much for him but at last he made his way to our door and entered His appearance corresponded to the sounds which we had heard He was an aged man clad in seafaring garb with an old pea jacket buttoned up to his throat His back was bowed his knees were shaky and his breathing was painfully asthmatic As he leaned upon a thick oaken cudgel his shoulders heaved in the effort to draw the air into his lungs He had a coloured scarf round his chin and I could see little of his face save a pair of keen dark eyes overhung by bushy white brows and long grey side whiskers Altogether he gave me the impression of a respectable master mariner who had fallen into years and poverty

What is it my man? I asked

He looked about him in the slow methodical fashion of old age

Is Mr Sherlock Holmes here? said he

No but I am acting for him You can tell me any message you have for him

It was to him himself I was to tell it said he

But I tell you that I am acting for him Was it about Mordecai Smith s boat?

'Yes I knows well where it is An I knows where the men he is after are An I knows where the treasure is I knows all about it

Then tell me, and I shall let him know

It was to him I was to tell it, he repeated with the petulant obstinacy of a very old man

Well, you must wait for him

No no I ain t goin to lose a whole day to please no one If Mr Holmes ain t here then Mr Holmes must find it all out for himself I don t care about the look of either of you and I won t tell a word

He shuffled towards the door, but Athelney Jones got in front of him

Wait a bit my friend said he 'You have important information and you must not walk off We shall keep you whether you like it or not until our friend returns

The old man made a little run towards the door but as Athelney Jones put his broad back up against it he recognized the uselessness of resistance

Pretty sort o treatment this! he cried, stamping his stick I come here to see a gentleman and you two who I never saw in my life seize me and treat me in this fashion!

You will be none the worse I said We shall recompense you for the loss of your time Sit over here on the sofa, and you will not have long to wait

He came across sullenly enough and seated himself with his face resting on his hands Jones and I resumed our cigars and our talk Suddenly however Holmes s voice broke in upon us

I think that you might offer me a cigar too he said

We both started in our chairs There was Holmes sitting close to us with an air of quiet amusement

Holmes! I exclaimed You here! But where is the old man?

Here is the old man said he holding out a heap of white hair Here he is – wig whiskers eyebrows and all I thought my disguise was pretty good, but I hardly expected that it would stand that test

Ah you rogue' cried Jones highly delighted You would have made an actor and a rare one You had the proper workhouse cough and those weak legs of yours are worth ten pound a week I thought I knew the glint of your eye though You didn t get away from us so easily, you see

I have been working in that get up all day said he lighting his cigar You see a good many of the criminal classes begin to know me – especially since our friend here took to publishing some of mv cases so I can only go on the war path under some simple disguise like this You got my wire?

Yes that was what brought me here

How has your case p ospered?

It has all come to nothing I have had to release two of my prisoners and there is no evidence against the other two

Never mind We shall give you two others in the place of them But you must put yourself under my orders You are welcome to all the official credit but you must act on the lines that I point out Is that agreed?

Entirely, if you help me to the men

Well then in the first place I shall want a fast police boat – a steam launch – to be at the Westminster Stairs at seven o clock

'That is easily managed There is always one about there but I can step across the road and telephone to make sure

'Then I shall want two staunch men in case of resistance

'There will be two or three in the boat What else?

When we secure the men we shall get the treasure I

think that it would be a pleasure to my friend here to take the box round to the young lady to whom half of it rightfully belongs Let her be the first to open it Eh Watson?

It would be a great pleasure to me

Rather an irregular proceeding said Jones shaking his head However the whole thing is irregular and I suppose we must wink at it The treasure must afterwards be handed over to the authorities until after the official investigation

Certainly That is easily managed One other point I should much like to have a few details about this matter from the lips of Jonathan Small himself You know I like to work the details of my cases out There is no objection to my having an unofficial interview with him either here in my rooms or elsewhere as long as he is efficiently guarded?

Well you are master of the situation I have had no proof yet of the existence of this Jonathan Small However if you can catch him I don t see how I can refuse you an interview with him

That is understood then?

Perfectly Is there anything else?

Only that I insist upon your dining with us It will be ready in half an hour I have oysters and a brace of grouse with something a little choice in white wines — Watson you have never yet recognized my merits as a housekeeper

10

The End of the Islander

Our meal was a merry one Holmes could talk exceedingly well when he chose and that night he did choose He appeared to be in a state of nervous exaltation I have never known him so brilliant He spoke on a quick succession of subjects – on miracle plays on medieval pottery on Stradivarius violins, on the Buddhism of Ceylon and on the warships of the future – handling each as though he had made a special study of it His bright humour marked the reaction from his black depression of the preceding days Athelney Jones proved to be a sociable soul in his hours of relaxation and faced his dinner with the air of a *bon vivant* For myself I felt elated at the thought that we were nearing the end of our task and I caught something of Holmes s gaiety None of us alluded during dinner to the cause which had brought us together

When the cloth was cleared Holmes glanced at his watch and filled up three glasses with port

One bumper said he to the success of our little expedition And now it is high time we were off Have you a pistol Watson?

I have my old service revolver in my desk

You had best take it then It is well to be prepared I see that the cab is at the door I ordered it for half past six

It was a little past seven before we reached the Westminster wharf and found our launch awaiting us Holmes eyed it critically

Is there anything to mark it as a police boat?

Yes that green lamp at the side

Then take it off

The small change was made we stepped on board and the ropes were cast off Jones Holmes, and I sat in the stern There was one man at the rudder one to tend the engines and two burly police inspectors forward

Where to? asked Jones

To the Tower Tell them to stop opposite to Jacobson s Yard

Our craft was evidently a very fast one We shot past the long lines of loaded barges as though they were stationary Holmes smiled with satisfaction as we over hauled a river steamer and left her behind us

We ought to be able to catch anything on the river he said

Well hardly that But there are not many launches to beat us

We shall have to catch the *Aurora* and she has a name for being a clipper I will tell you how the land lies Watson You recollect how annoyed I was at being baulked by so small a thing?

Yes

Well I gave my mind a thorough rest by plunging into a chemical analysis One of our greatest statesmen has said that a change of work is the best rest So it is When I had succeeded in dissolving the hydrocarbon which I was at work at I came back to our problem of the Sholtos and thought the whole matter out again My boys had been up the river and down the river without result The launch was not at any landing stage or wharf nor had it returned Yet it could hardly have been scuttled to hide their traces though that always re mained as a possible hypothesis if all else failed I knew that this man Small had a certain degree of low cunning but I did not think him capable of anything in the nature of delicate finesse That is usually a product of higher education I then reflected that since he had certainly been in London some time – as we had evidence that he maintained a continual watch over

Pondicherry Lodge – he could hardly leave at a moment s notice but would need some little time if it were only a day, to arrange his affairs That was the balance of probability at any rate

It seems to me to be a little weak said I it is more probable that he had arranged his affairs before ever he set out upon his *expedition*

No, I hardly think so This lair of his would be too valuable a retreat in case of need for him to give it up until he was sure that he could do without it But a second *consideration* struck me Jonathan Small must have felt that the peculiar appearance of his companion however much he may have top coated him would give rise to gossip and possibly be associated with this Norwood tragedy He was quite sharp enough to see that They had started from their headquarters under cover of darkness and he would wish to get back before it was broad light Now, it was past three o clock *according* to Mrs Smith when they got the boat It would be quite bright and people would be about in an hour or so Therefore I argued they did not go very far They paid Smi h well to hold his tongue reserved his launch for the final escape and hurried to their lodgings with the treasure box In a couple of nights when they had *time to* see what view the papers took and whether there was any suspicior they would make their way under cover of darkness to some ship at Gravesend or in the *Downs where no* doubt they had already arranged for passages to America or the Colonies

But the launch? They could not have taken that to *their lodgings*

Quite so I argued that the launch must be no great way off, in spite of its invisibility I then put myself in the place of Small and looked at it as a man of his capacity would He would probably consider *that to send* back the launch or to keep it at a wharf would make pursuit easy if the police did happen to get on his track How then

could he conceal the launch and yet have her at hand when wanted? I wondered what I should do myself if I were in his shoes I could only think of one way of doing it I might hand the launch over to some boat builder or repairer with directions to make a trifling change in her She would then be removed to his shed or yard and so be effectually concealed, while at the same time I could have her at a few hours notice

'That seems simple enough

It is just these very simple things which are extremely liable to be overlooked However I determined to act on the idea I started at once in this harmless seaman s rig and inquired at all the yards down the river I drew blank at fifteen but at the sixteenth – Jacobson s – I learned that the *Aurora* had been handed over to them two days ago by a wooden-legged man with some trivial directions as to her rudder There ain t naught amiss with her rudder said the foreman There she lies with the red streaks At that moment who should come down but Mordecai Smith the missing owner He was rather the worse for liquor I should not of course have known him but he bellowed out his name and the name of his launch I want her to night at eight o clock, said he – eight o clock sharp mind, for I have two gentlemen who won t be kept waiting They had evidently paid him well for he was very flush of money, chucking shillings about to the men I followed him some distance but he subsided into an alehouse so I went back to the yard and happening to pick up one of my boys on the way I stationed him as a sentry over the launch He is to stand at the water s edge and wave his handkerchief to us when they start We shall be lying off in the stream and it will be a strange thing if we do not take men treasure and all

You have planned it all very neatly, whether they are the right men or not said Jones but if the affair were in my hands I should have had a body of police in Jacobson s

Yard and arrested them when they came down

Which would have been never This man Small is a pretty shrewd fellow He would send a scout on ahead and if anything made him suspicious he would lie snug for another week

But you might have stuck to Mordecai Smith and so been led to their hiding place said I

In that case I should have wasted my day I think that it is a hundred to one against Smith knowing where they live As long as he has liquor and good pay why should he ask questions? They send him messages what to do No I thought over every possible course and this is the best

While this conversation had been proceeding we had been shooting the long series of bridges which span the Thames As we passed the City the last rays of the sun were gilding the cross upon the summit of St Paul s It was twilight before we reached the Tower

That is Jacobson s Yard said Holmes, pointing to a bristle of masts and rigging on the Surrey side Cruise gently up and down here under cover of this string of lighters He took a pair of night glasses from his pocket and gazed some time at the shore I see my sentry at his post he remarked but no sign of a handkerchief

Suppose we go downstream a short way and lie in wait for them said Jones eagerly

We were all eager by this time even the policemen and stokers who had a very vague idea of what was going forward

We have no right to take anything for granted Holmes answered It is certainly ten to one that they go downstream but we cannot be certain From this point we can see the entrance of the yard and they can hardly see us It will be a clear night and plenty of light We must stay where we are See how the folk swarm over yonder in the gaslight

They are coming from work in the yard

Dirty looking rascals but I suppose every one has

some little immortal spark concealed about him You would not think it to look at them There is no *a priori* probability about it A strange enigma is man'

Someone calls him a soul concealed in an animal I suggested

Winwood Reade is good upon the subject said Holmes He remarks that while the individual man is an insoluble puzzle in the aggregate he becomes a mathematical certainty You can for example never foretell what any one man will do but you can say with precision what an average number will be up to Individuals vary but percentages remain constant So says the statistician But do I see a handkerchief? Surely there is a white flutter over yonder

Yes it is your boy I cried I can see him plainly

And there is the *Aurora* exclaimed Holmes and going like the devil' Full speed ahead engineer Make after that launch with the yellow light By heaven I shall never forgive myself if she proves to have the heels of us'

She had slipped unseen through the yard entrance and passed between two or three small craft so that she had fairly got her speed up before we saw her Now she was flying down the stream near in to the shore going at a tremendous rate Jones looked gravely at her and shook his head

She is very fast he said I doubt if we shall catch her

We *must* catch her' cried Holmes between his teeth Heap it on stokers' Make her do all she can' If we burn the boat we must have them'

We were fairly after her now The furnaces roared and the powerful engines whizzed and clanked like a great metallic heart Her sharp steep prow cut through the still river water and sent two rolling waves to right and to left of us With every throb of the engines we sprang and quivered like a living thing One great

yellow lantern in our bows threw a long flickeri funnel of light in front of us Right ahead a dark bl upon the water showed where the *Aurora* lay and t swirl of white foam behind her spoke of the pace which she was going We flashed past barges steamer merchant-vessels in and out, behind this one and rou the other Voices hailed us out of the darkness but st the *Aurora* thundered on and still we followed cl upon her track

Pile it on men pile it on! cried Holmes looki down into the engine-room while the fierce glow fr below beat upon his eager aquiline face Get eve pound of steam you can

I think we gain a little said Jones with his eyes the *Aurora*

I am sure of it said I We shall be up with her i very few minutes

At that moment however as our evil fate would ha it a tug with three barges in tow blundered in betwe us It was only by putting our helm hard down that avoided a collision and before we could round them a recover our way the *Aurora* had gained a good tw hundred yards She was still however well in view a the murky uncertain twilight was settling into a clea starlit night Our boilers were strained to their utmos and the frail shell vibrated and creaked with the fier energy which was driving us along We had sh through the pool past the West India Docks down t long Deptford Reach and up again after rounding t Isle of Dogs The dull blur in front of us resolved itse now clearly into the dainty *Aurora* Jones turned o searchlight upon her so that we could plainly see t figures upon her deck One man sat by the stern, wi something black between his knees over which h stooped Beside him lay a dark mass which looked like Newfoundland dog The boy held the tiller whil against the red glare of the furnace I could see ol

Smith, stripped to the waist and shövelling coals for dear life They may have had some doubt at first as to whether we were really pursuing them but now as we followed every winding and turning which they took there could no longer be any question about it At Greenwich we were about three hundred paces behind them At Blackwall we could not have been more than two hundred and fifty I have coursed many creatures in many countries during my checkered career but never did sport give me such a wild thrill as this mad flying man hunt down the Thames Steadily we drew in upon them yard by yard In the silence of the night we could hear the panting and clanking of their machinery The man in the stern still crouched upon the deck and his arms were moving as though he were busy while every now and then he would look up and measure with a glance the distance which still separated us Nearer we came and nearer Jones yelled to them to stop We were not more than four boat s lengths behind them both boats flying at a tremendous pace It was a clear reach of the river with Barking Level upon one side and the melancholy Plumstead Marshes upon the other At our hail the man in the stern sprang up from the deck and shook his two clenched fists at us cursing the while in a high, cracked voice He was a good sized powerful man and as he stood poising himself with legs astride I could see that from the thigh downward there was but a wooden stump upon the right side At the sound of his strident, angry cries there was movement in the huddled bundle upon the deck It straightened itself into a little black man – the smallest I have ever seen – with a great misshapen head and a shock of tangled dishevelled hair Holmes had already drawn his revolver and I whipped out mine at the sight of this savage distorted creature He was wrapped in some sort of dark ulster or blanket which left only his face exposed but that face was enough to give a man a sleepless night Never have I seen features so deeply

over his shoulders that we were able to haul him out and to drag him, like some evil fish over our side The two Smiths father and son sat sullenly in their launch but came aboard meekly enough when commanded The *Aurora* herself we hauled off and made fast to our stern A solid iron chest of Indian workmanship stood upon the deck This there could be no question was the same that had contained the ill omened treasure of the Sholtos There was no key, but it was of considerable weight so we transferred it carefully to our own little cabin As we steamed slowly upstream again we flashed our searchlight in every direction, but there was no sign of the Islander Somewhere in the dark ooze at the bottom of the Thames lie the bones of that strange visitor to our shores

See here, said Holmes pointing to the wooden hatchway We were hardly quick enough with our pistols There, sure enough, just behind where we had been standing, stuck one of those murderous darts which we knew so well It must have whizzed between us at the instant we fired Holmes smiled at it and shrugged his shoulders in his easy fashion but I confess that it turned me sick to think of the horrible death which had passed so close to us that night

11

The Great Agra Treasure

Our captive sat in the cabin opposite to the iron box which he had done so much and waited so long to gain He was a sunburned reckless eyed fellow with a network of lines and wrinkles all over his mahogany features, which told of a hard open air life There was a singular prominence about his bearded chin which marked a man who was not to be easily turned from his purpose His age may have been fifty or thereabouts for his black curly hair was thickly shot with grey His face in repose was not an unpleasing one though his heavy brows and aggressive chin gave him as I had lately seen, a terrible expression when moved to anger He sat now with his handcuffed hands upon his lap and his head sunk upon his breast while he looked with his keen twinkling eyes at the box which had been the cause of his ill doings It seemed to me that there was more sorrow than anger in his rigid and contained countenance Once he looked up at me with a gleam of something like humour in his eyes

Well Jonathan Small said Holmes lighting a cigar I am sorry that it has come to this

And so am I sir he answered frankly I don t believe that I can swing over the job I give you my word on the book that I never raised hand against Mr Sholto It was that little hell hound Tonga who shot one of his cursed darts into him I had no part in it sir I was as grieved as if it had been my blood relation I welted the little devil with the slack end of the rope for it but it was done and I could not undo it again

Have a cigar said Holmes and you had best take a pull out of my flask for you are very wet How could you expect so small and weak a man as this black fellow to overpower

Mr Sholto and hold him while you were climbing the rope

You seem to know as much about it as if you were there sir The truth is that I hoped to find the room clear I knew the habits of the house pretty well and it was the time when Mr Sholto usually went down to his supper I shall make no secret of the business The best defence that I can make is just the simple truth Now if it had been the old major I would have swung for him with a light heart I would have thought no more of knifing him than of smoking this cigar But it s cursed hard that I should be lagged over this young Sholto with whom I had no quarrel whatever

You are under the charge of Mr Athelney Jones of Scotland Yard He is going to bring you up to my rooms and I shall ask you for a true account of the matter You must make a clean breast of it for if you do I hope that I may be of use to you I think I can prove that the poison acts so quickly that the man was dead before ever you reached the room

That he was sir I never got such a turn in my life as when I saw him grinning at me with his head on his shoulder as I climbed through the window It fairly shook me sir I d have half killed Tonga for it if he had not scrambled off That was how he came to leave his club and some of his darts too as he tells me which I dare say helped to put you on our track though how you kept on it is more than I can tell I don t feel no malice against you for it But it does seem a queer thing he added with a bitter smile that I who have a fair claim to half a million of money should spend the first half of my life building a breakwater in the Andamans and am like to spend the other half digging drains at Dartmoor It was an evil day for me when first I clapped eyes upon the merchant Achmet and had to do with the Agra treasure which never brought anything but a curse yet upon the man who owned it To him it brought murder to Major Sholto it brought fear and guilt to me it has meant slavery for life

At this moment Athelney Jones thrust his broad face and heavy shoulders into the tiny cabin

Quite a family party he remarked I think I shall have a pull at that flask Holmes Well I think we may all congratulate each other Pity we didn t take the other alive but there was no choice I say Holmes you must confess that you cut it rather fine It was all we could do to overhaul her

All is well that ends well, said Holmes But I certainly did not know that the *Aurora* was such a clipper

Smith says she is one of the fastest launches on the river and that if he had had another man to help him with the engines we should never have caught her He swears he knew nothing of this Norwood business

Neither he did cried our prisoner— not a word I chose his launch because I heard that she was a flier We told him nothing but we paid him well and he was to get something handsome if we reached our vessel the *Esmeralda* at Gravesend outward bound for the Brazils

Well if he has done no wrong we shall see that no wrong comes to him If we are pretty quick in catching our men we are not so quick in condemning them It was amusing to notice how the consequential Jones was already beginning to give himself airs on the strength of the capture From the slight smile which played over Sherlock Holmes s face I could see that the speech had not been lost upon him

We will be at Vauxhall Bridge presently said Jones and shall land you Dr Watson with the treasure-box I need hardly tell you that I am taking a very grave responsibility upon myself in doing this It is most irregular but of course an agreement is an agreement I must however as a matter of duty send an inspector with you s nce you have so valuable a charge You will drive no doubt?

Yes I shall drive

It is a pity there is no key that we may make an

inventory first You will have to break it open Where is the key, my man?

At the bottom of the river, said Small shortly

Hum! There was no use your giving this unnecessary trouble We have had work enough already through you However Doctor, I need not warn you to be careful Bring the box back with you to the Baker Street rooms You will find us there on our way to the station

They landed me at Vauxhall with my heavy iron box and with a bluff genial inspector as my companion A quarter of an hour s drive brought us to Mrs Cecil Forrester s The servant seemed surprised at so late a visitor Mrs Cecil Forrester was out for the evening, she explained and likely to be very late Miss Morstan however, was in the drawing room so to the drawing room I went box in hand leaving the obliging inspector in the cab

She was seated by the open window dressed in some sort of white diaphanous material with a little touch of scarlet at the neck and waist The soft light of a shaded lamp fell upon her as she leaned back in the basket chair playing over her sweet grave face and tinting with a dull metallic sparkle the rich coils of her luxuriant hair One white arm and hand drooped over the side of the chair and her whole pose and figure spoke of an absorbing melancholy At the sound of my footfall she sprang to her feet, however and a bright flush of surprise and of pleasure coloured her pale cheeks

I heard a cab drive up she said I thought that Mrs Forrester had come back very early but I never dreamed that it might be you What news have you brought me?

I have brought something better than news said I putting down the box upon the table and speaking jovially and boisterously though my heart was heavy within me I have brought you something which is worth all the news in the world I have brought you a fortune

She glanced at the iron box

Is that the treasure then? she asked, coolly enough

Yes this is the great Agra treasure Half of it is yours and half is Thaddeus Sholto s You will have a couple of hundred thousand each Think of that! An annuity of ten thousand pounds There will be few richer young ladies in England Is it not glorious?

I think I must have been rather over acting my delight, and that she detected a hollow ring in my congratulations, for I saw her eyebrows rise a little and she glanced at me curiously

If I have it, said she I owe it to you

No no, I answered not to me but to my friend Sherlock Holmes With all the will in the world I could never have followed up a clue which has taxed even his analytical genius As it was we very nearly lost it at the last moment

Pray sit down and tell me all about it Dr Watson said she

I narrated briefly what had occurred since I had seen her last Holmes s new method of search the discovery of the *Aurora* the appearance of Athelney Jones our expedition in the evening and the wild chase down the Thames She listened with parted lips and shining eyes to my recital of our adventures When I spoke of the dart which had so narrowly missed us she turned so white that I feared that she was about to faint

It is nothing she said as I hastened to pour her out some water I am all right again It was a shock to me to hear that I had placed my friends in such horrible peril

That is all over I answered It was nothing I will tell you no more gloomy details Let us turn to something brighter There is the treasure What could be brighter than that? I got leave to bring it with me thinking that it would interest you to be the first to see it

It would be of the greatest interest to me she said There was no eagerness in her voice however It had

struck her, doubtless, that it might seem ungracious upon her part to be indifferent to a prize which had cost so much to win

'What a pretty box!' she said stooping over it This is Indian work I suppose?

Yes it is Benares metalwork

And so heavy!' she exclaimed, trying to raise it The box alone must be of some value Where is the key?

Small threw it into the Thames I answered I must borrow Mrs Forrester s poker

There was in the front a thick and broad hasp wrought in the image of a sitting Buddha Under this I thrust the end of the poker and twisted it outward as a lever The hasp sprang open with a loud snap With trembling fingers I flung back the lid We both stood gazing in astonishment The box was empty!

No wonder that it was heavy The ironwork was two thirds of an inch thick all round It was massive well made and solid like a chest constructed to carry things of great price but not one shred or crumb of metal or jewellery lay within it It was absolutely and completely empty

'The treasure is lost said Miss Morstan calmly

As I listened to the words and realized what they meant a great shadow seemed to pass from my soul I did not know how this Agra treasure had weighed me down until now that it was finally removed It was selfish no doubt disloyal wrong, but I could realize nothing save that the golden barrier was gone from between us

'Thank God! I ejaculated from my very heart

She looked at me with a quick questioning smile

Why do you say that? she asked

Because you are within my reach again I said taking her hand She did not withdraw it Because I love you Mary as truly as ever a man loved a woman Because this treasure these riches sealed my lips I

that they are gone I can tell you how I love you That is why I said, Thank God

Then I say 'Thank God too she whispered as I drew her to my side

Whoever had lost a treasure, I knew that night that I had gained one

12

The Strange Story of Jonathan Small

A very patient man was that inspector in the cab for it was a weary time before I rejoined him His face clouded over when I showed him the empty box

There goes the reward' said he gloomily Where there is no money there is no pay This night s work would have been worth a tenner each to Sam Brown and me if the treasure had been there

Mr Thaddeus Sholto is a rich man I said he will see that you are rewarded, treasure or no

The inspector shook his head despondently however

It s a bad job he repeated, and so Mr Athelney Jones will think

His forecast proved to be correct for the detective looked blank enough when I got to Baker Street and showed him the empty box They had only just arrived, Holmes the prisoner and he for they had changed their plans so far as to report themselves at a station upon the way My companion lounged in his armchair with his usual listless expression while Small sat stolidly opposite to him with his wooden leg cocked over his sound one As I exhibited the empty box he leaned back in his chair and laughed aloud

This is your doing Small said Athelney Jones angrily

Yes I have put it away where you shall never lay hand upon it he cried exultantly It is my treasure and if I can t have the loot I ll take darned good care that no one else does I tell you that no living man has any right to it unless it is three men who are in the Andaman convict barracks and myself I know now that I cannot have the use of it and I know that they cannot I have

taking the Queen s shilling and joining the Third Buffs which was just starting for India

I wasn t destined to do much soldiering, however I had just got past the goose step and learned to handle my musket, when I was fool enough to go swimming in the Ganges Luckily for me my company sergeant John Holder was in the water at the same time and he was one of the finest swimmers in the service A crocodile took me just as I was halfway across and nipped off my right leg as clean as a surgeon could have done it just above the knee What with the shock and the loss of blood, I fainted and should have been drowned if Holder had not caught hold of me and paddled for the bank I was five months in hospital over it and when at last I was able to limp out of it with this timber toe strapped to my stump I found myself invalided out of the Army and unfitted for any active occupation

I was, as you can imagine pretty down on my luck at this time for I was a useless cripple though not yet in *my twentieth year However, my misfortune soon proved* to be a blessing in disguise A man named Abel White who had come out there as an indigo planter wanted an overseer to look after his coolies and keep them up to their work He happened to be a friend of our colonel s who had taken an interest in me since the accident To make a long story short the colonel recommended me strongly for the post and as the work was mostly to be done on horseback my leg was no great obstacle for I had enough thigh left to keep a good grip on the saddle What I had to do was to ride over the plantation to keep an eye on the men as they worked and to report the idlers The pay was fair I had comfortable quarters and altogether I was content to spend the remainder of my life in indigo planting Mr Abel White was a kind man and he would often drop into my little shanty and smoke a pipe with me for white folk out there feel their hearts to each other as they never do here at home

Well I was never in luck s way long Suddenly without a note of warning, the great mutiny broke upon us One month India lay as still and peaceful to all appearance as Surrey or Kent the next there were two hundred thousand black devils let loose and the country was a perfect hell Of course you know all about it gentlemen – a deal more than I do, very like since reading is not in my line I only know what I saw with my own eyes Our plantation was at a place called Muttra near the border of the Northwest Provinces Night after night the whole sky was alight with the burning bungalows, and day after day we had small companies of Europeans passing through our estate with their wives and children on their way to Agra where were the nearest troops Mr Abel White was an obstinate man He had it in his head that the affair had been exaggerated and that it would blow over as suddenly as it had sprung up There he sat on his veranda drinking whisky pegs and smoking cheroots while the country was in a blaze about him Of course we stuck by him I and Dawson who with his wife used to do the book work and the managing Well one fine day the crash came I had been away on a distant plantation and was riding slowly home in the evening when my eye fell upon something all huddled together at the bottom of a steep nullah I rode down to see what it was and the cold struck through my heart when I found it was Dawson s wife all cut into ribbons and half eaten by jackals and native dogs A little further up the road Dawson himself was lying on his face quite dead with an empty revolver in his hand and four sepoys lying across each other in front of him I reined up my horse wondering which way I should turn but at that moment I saw thick smoke curling up from Abel White s bungalow and the flames beginning to burst through roof I knew then that I could do my employer no ‿ but would only throw my own life away if I

the matter From where I stood I could see hundreds of the black fiends with their red coats still on their backs dancing and howling round the burning house Some of them pointed at me and a couple of bullets sang past my head so I broke away across the paddy fields and found myself at night safe within the walls at Agra

As it proved however, there was no great safety there either The whole country was up like a swarm of bees Wherever the English could collect in little bands they held just the ground that their guns commanded Everywhere else they were helpless fugitives It was a fight of the millions against the hundreds and the cruellest part of it was that these men that we fought against, foot horse and gunners were our own picked troops whom we had taught and trained handling our own weapons and blowing our own bugle calls At Agra there were the Third Bengal Fusiliers some Sikhs two troops of horse and a battery of artillery A volunteer corps of clerks and merchants had been formed and this I joined wooden leg and all We went out to meet the rebels at Shahgunge early in July and we beat them back for a time but our powder gave out and we had to fall back upon the city

Nothing but the worst news came to us from every side – which is not to be wondered at for if you look at the map you will see that we were right in the heart of it Lucknow is rather better than a hundred miles to the east, and Cawnpore about as far to the south From every point on the compass there was nothing but torture and murder and outrage

The city of Agra is a great place swarming with fanatics and fierce devil worshippers of all sorts Our handful of men were lost among the narrow winding streets Our leader moved across the river therefore and took up his position in the old fort of Agra I don t know if any of you gentlemen have ever read or heard anything of that old fort It is a very queer place – the queerest

with my Punjabees They were tall fierce looking chaps Mahomet Singh and Abdullah Khan by name both old fighting men who had borne arms against us at Chilian Wallah They could talk English pretty well, but I could get little out of them They preferred to stand together, and jabber all night in their queer Sikh lingo For myself I used to stand outside the gateway, looking down on the broad winding river and on the twinkling lights of the great city The beating of drums the rattle of tomtoms and the yells and howls of the rebels drunk with opium and with bang were enough to remind us all night of our dangerous neighbours across the stream Every two hours the officer of the night used to come round to all the posts to make sure that all was well

The third night of my watch was dark and dirty with a small driving rain It was dreary work standing in the gateway hour after hour in such weather I tried again and again to make my Sikhs talk but without much success At two in the morning the rounds passed and broke for a moment the weariness of the night Finding that my companions would not be led into conversation I took out my pipe and laid down my musket to strike the match In an instant the two Sikhs were upon me One of them snatched my firelock up and levelled it at my head while the other held a great knife to my throat and swore between his teeth that he would plunge it into me if I moved a step

My first thought was that these fellows were in league with the rebels and that this was the beginning of an assault If our door were in the hands of the sepoys the place must fall and the women and children be treated as they were in Cawnpore Maybe you gentlemen think that I am just making out a case for myself but I give you my word that when I thought of that though I felt the point of the knife at my throat I opened my mouth with the intention of giving a scream if it was my last

one which might alarm the main guard The man who held me seemed to know my thoughts for even as I braced myself to it he whispered Don t make a noise The fort is safe enough There are no rebel dogs on this side of the river There was the ring of truth in what he said, and I knew that if I raised my voice I was a dead man I could read it in the fellow s brown eyes I waited therefore in silence to see what it was that they wanted from me

Listen to me sahib, said the taller and fiercer of the pair the one whom they called Abdullah Khan You must either be with us now, or you must be silenced forever The thing is too great a one for us to hesitate Either you are heart and soul with us on your oath on the cross of the Christians, or your body this night shall be thrown into the ditch and we shall pass over to our brothers in the rebel army There is no middle way Which is it to be – death or life? We can only give you three minutes to decide, for the time is passing, and all must be done before the rounds come again

How can I decide? said I You have not told me what you want of me But I tell you now that if it is anything against the safety of the fort I will have no truck with it so you can drive home your knife and welcome

It is nothing against the fort, said he We only ask you to do that which your countrymen come to this land for We ask you to be rich If you will be one of us this night we will swear to you upon the naked knife and by the threefold oath which no Sikh was ever known to break, that you shall have your fair share of the loot A quarter of the treasure shall be yours We can say no fairer '

But what is the treasure then? I asked I am as ready to be rich as you can be if you will but show me how it can be done

You will swear then said he by the bones of your father, by the honour of your mother, by the cross of your faith to raise no hand and speak no word against us either now or afterwards?

I will swear it I answered provided that the fort *is not endangered*

Then my comrade and I will swear that you shall have a quarter of the treasure which shall be equally divided among the four of us

There are but three said I

No Dost Akbar must have his share We can tell the tale to you while we wait them Do you stand at the gate Mahomet Singh and give notice of their coming The thing stands thus sahib and I tell it to you because I know that an oath is binding upon a Feringhee and that we may trust you Had you been a lying Hindoo though you had sworn by all the gods in their false temples your blood would have been upon the knife and your body in the water But the Sikh knows the English man and the Englishman knows the Sikh Hearken then to what I have to say

There is a rajah in the northern provinces who has much wealth though his lands are small Much has come to him from his father and more still he has set by himself for he is of a low nature and hoards his gold rather than spend it When the troubles broke out he would be friends both with the lion and the tiger – with the sepoy and with the Company s *raj* Soon however it seemed to him that the white men s day was come for through all the land he could hear of nothing but of their death and their overthrow Yet being a careful man he made such plans that come what might half at least of his treasure should be left to him That which was in gold and silver he kept by him in the vaults of his palace but the most precious stones and the choicest pearls that he had he put in an iron box and sent it by a trusty servant who under the guise of a merchant

should take it to the fort at Agra there to lie until the land is at peace Thus, if the rebels won he would have his money, but if the Company conquered, his jewels would be saved to him Having thus divided his hoard he threw himself into the cause of the sepoys since they were strong upon his borders By his doing this mark you, sahib his property becomes the due of those who have been true to their salt

This pretended merchant who travels under the name of Achmet, is now in the city of Agra and desires to gain his way into the fort He has with him as travelling-companion my foster brother Dost Akbar, who knows his secret Dost Akbar has promised this night to lead him to a side postern of the fort, and has chosen this one for his purpose Here he will come presently, and here he will find Mahomet Singh and myself awaiting him The place is lonely, and none shall know of his coming The world shall know the merchant Achmet no more but the great treasure of the rajah shall be divided among us What say you to it sahib?

In Worcestershire the life of a man seems a great and a sacred thing but it is very different when there is fire and blood all round you and you have been used to meeting death at every turn Whether Achmet the merchant lived or died was a thing as light as air to me but at the talk about the treasure my heart turned to it and I thought of what I might do in the old country with it and how my folk would stare when they saw their ne er-do-weel coming back with his pockets full of gold moidores I had therefore, already made up my mind Abdullah Khan however, thinking that I hesitated pressed the matter more closely

Consider, sahib said he that if this man is taken by the commandant he will be hung or shot and his jewels taken by the government so that no man will be a rupee the better for them Now since we do the taking of him why should we not do the rest as well? The

jewels will be as well with us as in the Company s coffers There will be enough to make every one of us rich men and great chiefs No one can know about the matter for here we are cut off from all men What could be better for the purpose? Say again then sahib whether you are with us or if we must look upon you as an enemy

I am with you heart and soul said I

It is well he answered handing me back my firelock You see that we trust you for your word like ours is not to be broken We have now only to wait for my brother and the merchant

Does your brother know then, of what you will do? I asked

'The plan is his He has devised it We will go to the gate and share the watch with Mahomet Singh

The rain was still falling steadily for it was just the beginning of the wet season Brown heavy clouds were drifting across the sky and it was hard to see more than a stonecast A deep moat lay in front of our door but the water was in places nearly dried up and it could easily be crossed It was strange to me to be standing there with those two wild Punjabees waiting for the man who was coming to his death

Suddenly my eye caught the glint of a shaded lantern at the other side of the moat It vanished among the mound heaps and then appeared again coming slowly in our direction

Here they are' I exclaimed

'You will challenge him sahib as usual whispered Abdullah Give him no cause for fear Send us in with him and we shall do the rest while you stay here on guard Have the lantern ready to uncover that we may be sure that it is indeed the man

The light had flickered onward now stopping and now advancing until I could see two dark figures upon the other side of the moat I let them scramble down the

behind while they marched in through the dark gate way Never was a man so compassed round with death I remained at the gateway with the lantern

I could hear the measured tramp of their footsteps sounding through the lonely corridors Suddenly it ceased and I heard voices and a scuffle with the sound of blows A moment later there came to my horror, a rush of footsteps coming in my direction with a loud breathing of a running man I turned my lantern down the long straight passage, and there was the fat man running like the wind with a smear of blood across his face and close at his heels bounding like a tiger the great black-bearded Sikh with a knife flashing in his hand I have never seen a man run so fast as that little merchant He was gaining on the Sikh and I could see that if he once passed me and got to the open air he would save himself yet My heart softened to him but again the thought of his treasure turned me hard and bitter I cast my firelock between his legs as he raced past and he rolled twice over like a shot rabbit Ere he could stagger to his feet the Sikh was upon him and buried his knife twice in his side The man never uttered moan nor moved muscle but lay where he had fallen I think myself that he may have broken his neck with the fall You see gentlemen that I am keeping my promise I am telling you every word of the business just exactly as it happened whether it is in my favour or not

He stopped and held out his manacled hands for the whisky and water which Holmes had brewed for him For myself I confess that I had now conceived the utmost horror of the man not only for this cold blooded business in which he had been concerned but even more for the somewhat flippant and careless way in which he narrated it Whatever punishment was in store for him I felt that he might expect no sympathy from me Sherlock Holmes and Jones sat with their hands upon their knees deeply interested in the story but with the

same disgust written upon their faces He may have observed it for there was a touch of defiance in his voice and manner as he proceeded

It was all very bad no doubt, said he I should like to know how many fellows in my shoes would have refused a share of this loot when they knew that they would have their throats cut for their pains Besides it was my life or his when once he was in the fort If he had got out the whole business would come to light and I should have been court martialled and shot as likely as not, for people were not very lenient at a time like that

Go on with your story, said Holmes shortly

Well we carried him in Abdullah Akbar and I A fine weight he was too for all that he was so short Mahomet Singh was left to guard the door We took him to a place which the Sikhs had already prepared It was some distance off, where a winding passage leads to a great empty hall, the brick walls of which were all crumbling to pieces The earth floor had sunk in at one place, making a natural grave so we left Achmet the merchant there having first covered him over with loose bricks This done we all went back to the treasure

It lay where he had dropped it when he was first attacked The box was the same which now lies open upon your table A key was hung by a silken cord to that carved handle upon the top We opened it and the light of the lantern gleamed upon a collection of gems such as I have read of and thought about when I was a little lad at Pershore It was blinding to look upon them When we had feasted our eyes we took them all out and made a list of them There were one hundred and forty three diamonds of the first water including one which has been called I believe the Great Mogul and is said to be the second largest stone in existence Then there were ninety-seven very fine emeralds and one hundred and seventy rubies, some of which however were small There were forty carbuncles, two hundred and ten

sapphires sixty one agates and a great quantity of beryls onyxes cats -eyes turquoises and other stones the very names of which I did not know at the time though I have become more familiar with them since Besides this there were nearly three hundred very fine pearls twelve of which were set in a gold coronet By the way these last had been taken out of the chest and were not there when I recovered it

After we had counted our treasures we put them back into the chest and carried them to the gateway to show them to Mahomet Singh Then we solemnly renewed our oath to stand by each other and be true to our secret We agreed to conceal our loot in a safe place until the country should be at peace again and then to divide it equally among ourselves There was no use dividing it at present for if gems of such value were found upon us it would cause suspicion and there was no privacy in the fort nor any place where we could keep them We carried the box therefore into the same hall where we had buried the body and there under certain bricks in the best preserved wall we made a hollow and put our treasure We made careful note of the place and next day I drew four plans, one for each of us and put the sign of the four of us at the bottom for we had sworn that we should each always act for all so that none might take advantage This is an oath that I can put my hand to my heart and swear that I have never broken

Well there s no use my telling you gentlemen what came of the Indian mutiny After Wilson took Delhi and Sir Colin relieved Lucknow the back of the business was broken Fresh troops came pouring in and Nana Sahib made himself scarce over the frontier A flying column under Colonel Greathed came round to Agra and cleared the Pandies away from it Peace seemed to be settling upon the country and we four were beginning to hope that the time was at hand when we might safely go off with our shares of the plunder In a moment however

our hopes were shattered by our being arrested as the murderers of Achmet

It came about in this way When the rajah put his jewels into the hands of Achmet he did it because he knew that he was a trusty man They are suspicious folk in the East, however so what does this rajah do but take a second even more trusty servant and set him to play the spy upon the first This second man was ordered never to let Achmet out of his sight and he followed him like his shadow He went after him that night and saw him pass through the doorway Of course he thought he had taken refuge in the fort and applied for admission there himself next day, but could find no trace of Achmet This seemed to him so strange that he spoke about it to a sergeant of guides, who brought it to the ears of the commandant A thorough search was quickly made, and the body was discovered Thus at the very moment that we thought that all was safe we were all four seized and brought to trial on a charge of murder – three of us because we had held the gate that night and the fourth because he was known to have been in the company of the murdered man Not a word about the jewels came out at the trial for the rajah had been deposed and driven out of India so no one had any particular interest in them The murder however was clearly made out and it was certain that we must all have been concerned in it The three Sikhs got penal servitude for life, and I was condemned to death though my sentence was afterwards commuted to the same as the others

It was rather a queer position that we found ourselves in then There we were all four tied by the leg and with precious little chance of ever getting out again while we each held a secret which might have put each of us in a palace if we could only have made use of it It was enough to make a man eat his heart out to have to stand the kick and the cuff of every petty jack in-office to have rice to eat and water to drink when that gorgeous

fortune was ready for him outside just waiting to be picked up It might have driven me mad but I was always a pretty stubborn one so I just held on and bided my time

At last it seemed to me to have come I was changed *from Agra to Madras* and *from there to Blair Island in* the Andamans There are very few white convicts at this settlement and as I had behaved well from the first I soon found myself a sort of privileged person I was given a hut in Hope Town, which is a small place on the slopes of Mount Harriet, and I was left pretty much to myself It is a dreary, fever stricken place and all beyond our little clearings was infested with wild cannibal natives who were ready enough to blow a poisoned dart at us if they saw a chance There was digging and ditching and yam planting and a dozen other things to be done so we were busy enough all day though in the evening we had a little time to ourselves Among other things I learned to dispense drugs for the surgeon and picked up a smattering of his knowledge All the time I was on the lookout for a chance to escape but it is hundreds of miles from any other land and there is little or no wind in those seas so it was a terribly difficult job to get away

The surgeon Dr Somerton was a fast sporting young chap and the other young officers would meet in his rooms of an evening and play cards The surgery where I used to make up my drugs was next to his sitting room with a small window between us Often if I felt lonesome I used to turn out the lamp in the surgery and then standing there I could hear their talk and watch their play I am fond of a hand at cards myself and it was almost as good as having one to watch the others There was Major Sholto Captain Morstan and Lieutenant Bromley Brown who were in command of the native troops and there was the surgeon himself and two or three prison-officials crafty old hands who

played a nice sly safe game A very snug little party they used to make

Well, the e was one thing which very soon struck me, and that was that the soldiers used always to lose and the civilians to win Mind, I don t say there was anything unfair, but so it was These prison chaps had done little else than play cards ever since they had been at the Andamans and they knew each other s game to a point while the others just played to pass the time and threw their cards down anyhow Night after night the soldiers got up poorer men and the poorer they got the more keen they were to play Major Sholto was the hardest hit He used to pay in notes and gold at first but soon it came to notes of hand and for big sums He sometimes would win for a few deals just to give him heart, and then the luck would set in against him worse than ever All day he would wander about as black as thunder, and he took to drinking a deal more than was good for him

One night he lost even more heavily than usual I was sitting in my hut when he and Captain Morstan came stumbling along on the way to their quarters They were bosom friends, those two and never far apart The major was raving about his losses

It s all up, Morstan he was saying as they passed my hut I shall have to send in my papers I am a ruined man

Nonsense old chap' said the other slapping him upon the shoulder I ve had a nasty facer myself but – That was all I could hear but it was enough to set me thinking

A couple of days later Major Sholto was strolling on the beach so I took the chance of speaking to him

I wish to have your advice Major, said I

Well Small, what is it? he asked taking his cheroot from his lips

I wanted to ask you sir, said I who is the proper

talking it over my friend here and I and we have come to the conclusion that this secret of yours is hardly a government matter after all but is a private concern of your own, which of course you have the power of disposing of as you think best Now the question is What price would you ask for it? We might be inclined to take it up and at least look into it if we could agree as to terms He tried to speak in a cool careless way but his eyes were shining with excitement and greed

Why as to that gentlemen I answered trying also to be cool but feeling as excited as he did there is only one bargain which a man in my position can make I shall want you to help me to my freedom and to help my three companions to theirs We shall then take you into partnership and give you a fifth share to divide between you '

Hum! said he A fifth share! That is not very tempting

It would come to fifty thousand apiece said I

But how can we gain your freedom? You know very well that you ask an impossibility

Nothing of the sort I answered I have thought it all out to the last detail The only bar to our escape is that we can get no boat fit for the voyage and no provisions to last us for so long a time There are plenty of little yachts and yawls at Calcutta or Madras which would serve our turn well Do you bring one over We shall engage to get aboard her by night and if you will drop us on any part of the Indian coast you will have done your part of the bargain

If there were only one he said

None or all I answered We have sworn it The four of us must always act together

You see Morstan said he, Small is a man of his word He does not flinch from his friends I think we may very well trust him

It s a dirty business the other answered Yet as

you say the money will save our commissions handsomely

Well Small said the major we must I suppose, try and meet you We must first of course test the truth of your story Tell me where the box is hid and I shall get leave of absence and go back to India in the monthly relief boat to inquire into the affair

Not so fast said I growing colder as he got hot I must have the consent of my three comrades I tell you that it is four or none with us

Nonsense' he broke in What have three black fellows to do with our agreement?

Black or blue said I they are in with me and we all go together

Well the matter ended by a second meeting at which Mahomet Singh Abdullah Khan and Dost Akbar were all present We talked the matter over again and at last we came to an arrangement We were to provide both the officers with charts of the part of the Agra fort, and mark the place in the wall where the treasure was hid Major Sholto was to go to India to test our story If he found the box he was to leave it there to send out a small yacht provisioned for a voyage which was to lie off Rutland Island and to which we were to make our way and finally to return to his duties Captain Morstan was then to apply for leave of absence to meet us at Agra and there we were to have a final division of the treasure, he taking the major s share as well as his own All this we sealed by the most solemn oaths that the mind could think or the lips utter I sat up all night with paper and ink and by the morning I had the two charts all ready signed with the sign of four – that is of Abdullah Akbar, Mahomet and myself

Well, gentlemen I weary you with my long story, and I know that my friend Mr Jones is impatient to get me safely stowed in chokey I ll make it as short as I can The villain Sholto went off to India but he never came

back again *Captain Morstan showed me his name* among a list of passengers in one of the mail boats very shortly afterwards His uncle had died leaving him a fortune, and he had left the Army yet he could stoop to treat five men as he had treated us Morstan went over to Agra shortly afterwards and found, as we expected that the treasure was indeed gone The scoundrel had stolen it all without carrying out one of the conditions on which we had sold him the secret From that time I lived *only for vengeance I thought of it by day and I nursed it* by night It became an overpowering absorbing passion with me I cared nothing for the law – nothing for the gallows To escape to track down Sholto to have my hand upon his throat – that was my one thought Even the Agra treasure had come to be a smaller thing in my mind than the slaying of Sholto

Well I have set my mind on many things in this life and never one which I did not carry out But it was weary years before my time came *I have told you that I* had picked up something of medicine One day when Dr Somerton was down with a fever a little Andaman Islander was picked up by a convict gang in the woods He was sick to death and had gone to a lonely place to die I took him in hand though he was as venomous as a young snake, and after a couple of months I got him all right and able to walk He took a kind of fancy to me then and would hardly go back to his woods but was always hanging *about my hut I learned a little of his* lingo from him and this made him all the fonder of me

'Tonga – for that was his name – was a fine boatman and owned a big roomy canoe of his own When I found that he was devoted to me and would do anything to serve me I saw my chance of escape I talked it over with him He was to bring his boat round on a certain night to an old wharf which was never guarded and there he was to pick me up I gave him directions to

have several gourds of water and a lot of yams cocoanuts and sweet potatoes

He was staunch and true was little Tonga No man ever had a more faithful mate At the night named he had his boat at the wharf As it chanced however there was one of the convict guard down there – a vile Pathan who had never missed a chance of insulting and injuring me I had always vowed vengeance and now I had my chance It was as if fate had placed him in my way that I might pay my debt before I left the island He stood on the bank with his back to me and his carbine on his shoulder I looked about for a stone to beat out his brains with, but none could I see

'Then a queer thought came into my head and showed me where I could lay my hand on a weapon I sat down in the darkness and unstrapped my wooden leg With three long hops I was on him He put his carbine to his shoulder but I struck him full and knocked the whole front of his skull in You can see the split in the wood now where I hit him We both went down together for I could not keep my balance but when I got up I found him still lying quiet enough I made for the boat and in an hour we were well out at sea Tonga had brought all his earthly possessions with him his arms and his gods Among other things he had a long bamboo spear and some Andaman cocoanut matting with which I made a sort of a sail For ten days we were beating about trusting to luck and on the eleventh we were picked up by a trader which was going from Singapore to Jiddah with a cargo of Malay pilgrims They were a rum crowd and Tonga and I soon managed to settle down among them They had one very good quality they let you alone and asked no questions

Well if I were to tell you all the adventures that my little chum and I went through you would not thank me for I would have you here until the sun was shining Here and there we drifted about the world something always

turning up to keep us from London All the time however I never lost sight of my purpose I would dream of Sholto at night A hundred times I have killed him in my sleep At last however some three or four years ago we found ourselves in England I had no great difficulty in finding where Sholto lived and I set to work to discover whether he had realized on the treasure or if he still had it I made friends with someone who could help me – I name no names for I don t want to get anyone else in a hole – and I soon found that he still had the jewels Then I tried to get at him in many ways but he was pretty sly and had always two prize fighters besides his sons and his *khitmutgar* on guard over him

One day however I got word that he was dying I hurried at once to the garden mad that he should slip out of my clutches like that and looking through the window I saw him lying in his bed with his sons on each side of him I d have come through and taken my chance with the three of them only even as I looked at him his jaw dropped and I knew that he was gone I got into his room that same night though and I searched his papers to see if there was any record of where he had hidden our jewels There was not a line however so I came away bitter and savage as a man could be Before I left I bethought me that if I ever met my Sikh friends again it would be a satisfaction to know that I had left some mark of our hatred so I scrawled down the sign of the four of us as it had been on the chart and I pinned it on his bosom It was too much that he should be taken to the grave without some token from the men whom he had robbed and befooled

We earned a living at this time by my exhibiting poor Tonga at fairs and other such places as the black cannibal He would eat raw meat and dance his war-dance so we always had a hatful of pennies after a day s work I still heard all the news from Pondicherry Lodge and for some years there was no news to hear except that

they were hunting for the treasure At last however came what we had waited for so long The treasure had been found It was up at the top of the house in Mr Bartholomew Sholto s chemical laboratory I came at once and had a look at the place, but I could not see how with my wooden leg, I was to make my way up to it I learned however about a trapdoor in the roof and also about Mr Sholto s supper hour It seemed to me that I could manage the thing easily through Tonga I brought him out with me with a long rope wound round his waist He could climb like a cat and he soon made his way through the roof but as ill luck would have it, Bartholomew Sholto was still in the room to his cost Tonga thought he had done something very clever in killing him for when I came up by the rope I found him strutting about as proud as a peacock Very much surprised was he when I made at him with the rope s end and cursed him for a little bloodthirsty imp I took the treasure box and let it down, and then slid down myself, having first left the sign of the four upon the table to show that the jewels had come back at last to those who had most right to them Tonga then pulled up the rope closed the window and made off the way that he had come

I don t know that I have anything else to tell you I had heard a waterman speak of the speed of Smith s launch the *Aurora* so I thought she would be a handy craft for our escape I engaged with old Smith and was to give him a big sum if he got us safe to our ship He knew no doubt that there was some screw loose but he was not in our secrets All this is the truth and if I tell it to you gentlemen it is not to amuse you – for you have not done me a very good turn – but it is because I believe the best defence I can make is just to hold back nothing but let all the world know how badly I have myself been served by Major Sholto, and how innocent I am of the death of his son

A very remarkable account, said Sherlock Holmes A fitting wind up to an extremely interesting case There is nothing at all new to me in the latter part of your narrative except that you brought your own rope That I did not know By the way I had hoped that Tonga had lost all his darts yet he managed to shoot one at us in the boat

He had lost them all sir except the one which was in his blow pipe at the time

Ah, of course said Holmes I had not thought of that

Is there any other point which you would like to ask about? asked the convict affably

I think not, thank you, my companion answered

Well Holmes said Athelney Jones you are a man to be humoured and we all know that you are a connoisseur of crime but duty is duty and I have gone rather far in doing what you and your friend asked me I shall feel more at ease when we have our story teller here safe under lock and key The cab still waits and there are two inspectors downstairs I am much obliged to you both for your assistance Of course you will be wanted at the trial Good night to you

Good night gentlemen both said Jonathan Small

You first Small remarked the wary Jones as they left the room I ll take particular care that you don t club me with your wooden leg whatever you may have done to the gentleman at the Andaman Isles

Well, and there is the end of our little drama I remarked after we had sat some time smoking in silence I fear that it may be the last investigation in which I shall have the chance of studying your methods Miss Morstan has done me the honour to accept me as a husband in prospective

He gave a most dismal groan

I feared as much said he I really cannot congratulate you

I was a little hurt

Have you any reason to be dissatisfied with my choice? I asked

Not at all I think she is one of the most charming young ladies I ever met and might have been most useful in such work as we have been doing She had a decided genius that way witness the way in which she preserved that Agra plan from all the other papers of her father But love is an emotional thing and whatever is emotional is opposed to that true cold reason which I place above all things I should never marry myself lest I bias my judgment

I trust said I laughing that my judgment may survive the ordeal But you look weary

Yes the reaction is already upon me I shall be as limp as a rag for a week

Strange said I how terms of what in another man I should call laziness alternate with your fits of splendid energy and vigour

Yes he answered, there are in me the makings of a very fine loafer and also of a pretty spry sort of fellow I often think of those lines of old Goethe

Schade dass die Natur nur einen Mensch aus dir schuf Denn zum würdigen Mann war und zum Schelmen der Stoff

By the way apropos of this Norwood business you see that they had as I surmised a confederate in the house who could be none other than Lal Rao the butler so Jones actually has the undivided honour of having *caught one fish in his great haul*

The division seems rather unfair I remarked You have done all the work in this business I get a wife out of it Jones gets the credit pray what remains for you?

For me said Sherlock Holmes there still remains the cocaine bottle And he stretched his long white hand up for it

Born in Edinburgh in 1859 of an Irish Catholic family **Sir Arthur Conan Doyle** was educated at Stonyhurst and Edinburgh University and became a qualified doctor He practised at Southsea for eight years till 1890 He was a man of versatile genius and got admiration from men of all nations His influence on police methods and criminology is all over the world His Historical novels though a rich treasure *of literature in a way are over shadowed* by the fame of his great classic Sherlock Holmes He wrote a good number of stories He was a great Historian who wrote history of the Boer War and six-volume history of the Great War He worked in close association with Sir Winston Churchill in the Pilgrim Trust. He was a great Foot ball & Cricket player expert boxer and billiards player At his death in 1930 Sir Winston Churchill said

I had a great admiration for him Of course I read every Sherlock Holmes story but the works I like even more than the detective stories are the great historical novels which like Sherlock Holmes have certainly found a permanent place in English literature